

A YEAR OF STRANGERS

YOÏ PAWLOWSKA

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STRANGERS



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A YEAR OF STRANGERS

BY YOÏ PAWLOWSKA

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TO
WILMA AND GABOR

THE HAND OF SPRING WILL UNFOLD
THE SECRET OF WINTER

Mathnawi-i-Ma'navi

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I have just finished a year of my life, during which I have seen only strangers and no one whom I had known before. These are some of the strangers who have become my friends.

Though I have headed each sketch by the name of one of them, I do not, of course, mean these pages to be in any way an account of their lives or personalities, but only an impression of a few of the moments which we have passed together.

FLANDERS

BERTHA

SHE belongs to the North Sea and a desolate *Bertha* coast, some grey September days and wind-blown rain. Her name is Bertha.

I had lost my way and had wandered near to a small farm—a dog stood by the door, he barked at me; a strong, healthy-looking young woman came out of the cottage and asked me not to be afraid. We both smiled—she asked me to go in.

It had rained all day, a steady drizzle; it was a day on which one had to be out and near enough to the sea to feel the spray on one's face already wet from the rain. It was like passionate gusts of tears falling upon the tears of hopelessness.

I must have looked wet; the girl seemed to think I ought to let her dry my coat and cap, so I gave them to her to put by the fire and sat down, as she asked me to, on the only chair in the small kitchen.

She took from the fire an iron pot and put it on the ground, then sat on a footstool made of wood, and we talked.

She began by asking me questions. Was I not

Bertha afraid of being alone ? I answered that I liked it, and that unless I was shut in by four walls I did not know what fear meant.

Then I asked her about her life. She said it was uneventful, that she lived with her father, that they alone did all the work on the farm ; they had some cows, but did not make butter with the milk ; every morning he took the milk into a town near—she, too, went only once a week to the market there, and arrived in time for six o'clock mass.

After a little while she rose and offered to show me the farm. She lifted the iron pot from the floor and took it out of the house. I followed her across a small yard roughly paved with stones, and where those were missing wet with little ponds ; it was untidy, with pigs grubbing about for something to eat and chickens who were picking at food from a tin plate. It looked poor and dirty, but the cowsheds which we entered were clean, fresh straw had just been laid down. Her father stood by the door ; she told him she was showing me the farm and we shook hands.

He took the iron pot from her and she ran

back to the house to get a milking pail. She came *Bertha* back with it and with a glass and a sieve.

When she had milked the first cow she put the milk through the sieve and gave me some to drink ; it was frothy and warm, I liked it. We then arranged that I should come daily at the same time, and during all the time that I spent near there I went every day to the farm.

Bertha taught me to milk the cows, to feed the calves by putting my hands in their soft warm mouths so that they could learn to lap up the milk from the pail. She kept rabbits also in a pen ; we sat by them watching the little forest of wobbling ears as they gathered together to eat the food we brought for them.

From five in the morning and sometimes earlier she was busy working ; there was always something that had to be done, and even when we talked she sewed or knitted. We always sat, when in the house, in the little kitchen, but there was a parlour in which coarse lace curtains shrouded the windows, hiding the view of white-flecked green sea. The walls were washed white ; some photographs hung on them, one of her mother,

Bertha who was dead. On the top of the wooden frame in which her photograph was put *Bertha* had tied a sprig of rosemary. There was a picture of her brother, he wore a tall hat and a frock-coat ; he was a tailor in London, and she was very proud of his photograph.

On a table under a glass cover was a statue of St. Anthony of Padua with the child Christ in his arms ; near it, in a vase, were freshly gathered flowers.

I told *Bertha* that when I arrived in Rome I would send her a picture of the Holy Father and one of the Church of St. Peter's ; she showed me exactly where she would put them, so now I know where they hang.

She was always glad when anything pleased me, but she herself did not laugh often. She reminded me of an autumn day, through which heavy winds sigh a presage of the winter's darkness, which also seemed a part of her ; her eyes looked sadder than the sea through rain.

I asked her why she was unhappy. She said she thought it was perhaps because she looked at the sea too much, and she added : "It sobs

continually ; also the wind cries through our *Bertha* nights."

She cared for the animals, and felt all that hurt them : when a cow calved she cried bitterly all the time at the pain of the poor creature.

Sometimes we sat on the sand-dunes near the farm—when the tide was low there was a great stretch of sand. Often a priest in a long black cassock walked up and down reading a book, and in the late afternoon, always at the same time, a group of fishermen came by—tall, fair-haired men, with clean blue eyes.

Once I said to her : " If you were married, and some fair-haired babies played about the farm, do you think that you would be happier—do you not think that every time they laughed you would laugh also ? " She looked away to the sea, her voice became husky, and she said : " He was drowned out there, I came here as they were bringing home his dead body ; I made them lay him down on the sand, and I kissed him on his mouth within the sound of the sea. He had never spoken of love, but I knew, and I knew why he was waiting, and my waiting ended when I kissed

Bertha him as he lay dead. I will have no child, as I cannot have his child. Sometimes, when I sit here alone gazing at the sea, I seem to see him walking on the water towards me, holding a little child in his arms."

I thought of her statue of St. Anthony and its vase of flowers.

A few miles away was an empty convent from which all the nuns had been turned away. One day we walked to see the deserted building, which looked more desolate and empty by reason of its hideous modernity. It was a low, long house, almost hidden by some hillocks of sand; the garden door had been taken away, the garden itself was overrun with weeds; the wind had burst open a shutter of a window, and it was banging dismally against the stones of the building. With very little difficulty we pushed open a door and walked in. The long corridor was hardly lighted by the feeble flecks of light which came through the closed and darkened windows: it all looked inexpressibly sad and gloomy. We walked into one or two rooms—all empty; in one, however, there was hung on the wall a picture of Christ,

under which was written, "Ye shall be sorrowful, *Bertha* but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." We looked at this together, and I said, "Where are the good women who lived useful and sheltered lives here? They are unhappy now, but is it not wonderful to know that above all their misery at the injury done to them is their absolute belief in the promise that 'your sorrow shall be turned into joy'? But I believe in joy now, now in this life, and that living is meant to be good; and if only we could learn to believe in this, that it could be so for all of us."

Then I caught hold of Bertha's hand and said: "Come away quickly, quickly; it is cold here without their voices, and their spirits seem to fill the space."

As we ran down the long passage some rats scuffled past, and suddenly through the open door a white bird fluttered and disappeared into the gloom beyond us. At the door we stopped. There had been no sun for us to notice its setting, but darkness had come; and as we faced young Night, pale in delicate grey mist, we saw a tangle

Bertha of moving branches, bending trees, and dancing dead leaves. We shut the door behind us, and were out again under the lashes of the cold north wind, and sought a sheltered place where we sat facing a desperate sea.

Often when she milked the cows I sat by the rabbit-pen, and she made me tell her of many things—of lives whose days are as near to me as yesterday. I told her stories of marches over deserts, of the horror of thirst and the despair of distances ; of the sound of the creak of the litter and the glow of dawn's first light on the faces of the men carrying it ; of sudden battles ; of dark, fine men ; of bloody death, and the cries of the dying for some remembered place ; of the strange birds who watched the fight with me, who fluttered and whispered, but waited and waited ; of burning heat and nights of bitter cold ; of mountains that seemed to fight for a place in the sky ; of plains that were more endless than the sea.

She would in return sing to me songs of her country—she had a pretty voice. I taught her a little Hungarian song which was sad ; she

liked to sing it more than all the others. It *Bertha* began :

“I thanked God for giving me my love and happiness.

Why has God been cruel to me who had thanked Him ?”

The day before I left we sat near the animals, talking. At last I was obliged to go: *Bertha* came with me as far as the sand-dunes. We stood there silently ; she held out both her hands, I put mine into them. She nodded her head backward towards the farm—there was a red light in the kitchen window. She said : “ Come back and see me ; I shall often wait your coming on the ridge of the sand-dunes—come back.”

ITALY

ADELINA

A DELINA is nine years old. She is the *Adelina* daughter of a contadina who lives in the Sabine hills and she has been sent to school in Rome.

To-day was a holiday ; Adelina came to see me. We had made friends in the summer amongst the mountains where she lived ; she had often sat by me in the evenings, on a hill facing a valley, where below us we saw many rock-villages whose houses in the daytime looked as if afraid of falling, they clung so closely together, and whose lights at night shone like clustering glowworms. There were lights everywhere, fires glowed in the distance where they were burning the chaff that remained from the threshing of the day ; sometimes we saw fireworks, for on the eve of a feast of the patron saint of any of the villages they always had a torchlight procession with fireworks afterwards.

On the feast day of the saint of our village—San Sisto—the whole place was astir from dawn. Usually there was no meat to be bought there—

Adelina no one could afford to buy it—but when I went out early on that morning to get, as I could, twenty green figs for one penny, I found the one and only street decorated with killed sheep and oxen for sale. It looked dreadful, but it made me realise what an important day it was.

The village looked quite Eastern that night ; there were lanterns everywhere made of rough bits of wood covered with red paper, and these were hung up in cut branches of trees tied outside the windows and doors of the houses. All the shops, too, were like shops in the East, windowless but with wide doors that opened as shutters do. In the daytime they were fathomless caves, but when lighted at night by candles one saw on the further walls enlarged shadows of the people who were talking together in groups.

Every one followed the procession, I walked with *Adelina* : we were both pleased with the waving banners, the sound of the church-bells which pealed all the time, and with the wild, barbaric voices of the people singing hymns.

When we reached the chapel—the relics were taken from the church to the chapel below the

village—cannon boomed, the smoke from them *Adelina* covered us ; it seemed as if we were in clouds of flame, we could not see the white-robed men who were carrying the torches. The smoke cleared away and wandered down the valley, resting, as if it wished to guard them, on the distant houses of Olevano.

Afterwards there were fireworks—we thought them splendid though the moon shone full, which people said was a pity, but I liked that ; it was as if the stars, the moon, and the fleecy white clouds in the sky took their part in our festival.

When I said “Good-night” to every one outside the church door it was so late that the lanterns had all burnt out, the narrow staircase-like street was black from the deep shadows, but on one side the houses were grey in the light of the moon. I crept through the vine-covered pergola of my garden, looking up at the sky through strange patterns of vine-leaves and unripe clusters of grapes, and climbed up to my tower, where on the roof I waited till dawn. Below me—everything lay below that village—were many sleeping villages, some standing on rocks like dream-towns faintly

Adelina visible in the veils of moonlight, some hidden by the shadows of the hills. Opposite me the mountain of Guadagnolo stood sullen and menacing.

Adelina, sitting here by my fire and talking to me, reminded me of all these things. I remembered too our early morning walks to the Franciscan monastery ; when we went there for mass at seven and climbed down from the hill by a rough path over blue-grey rocks, we noticed how blue the dew-laden cobwebs looked on them. We knelt in the monastery chapel by a heavy dark wood screen which divided the church ; through the wide-open door at the side the sunshine made a carpet of light right up to where, under an altar, lay the body of Beato Tommaso.

After the service we waited for Father Bernardino, who gave us each a glass of water from the well. As he talked to us he would take little pinches of snuff from a small black box which he held in his hands ; standing in the sun he looked worn and old and his smile seemed sad. His habit was much patched ; one sleeve though was quite new, a warm brown, the other patches had lost all tinge of red.

Adelina and I often spent a day in the chestnut *Adelina* forests ; we took figs and lettuce sandwiches with us. Sometimes she would wander away and play, and I sat by a stream listening to its monotonous yet always different song. Living in Italy, and always within sound of some fountain, one realises how surprisingly varied are the notes of singing water. Never do two drops fall in just the same way, and in each difference there is diversity of harmony.

The air was often heavy, the distance lost in mist ; but the sun burnt, burnt even into the shade where I sat. Sometimes I wished that it would hide in clouds and that the clouds would fall in rain. I wanted to walk with bare feet on sodden green grass and to feel the raindrops falling on my eyes, my hair, my mouth.

When she was tired of playing I would tell her stories. She liked eastern tales of 'Ifrits who were shut up in bottles, and stories of princesses who were wafted away on golden carpets through the air to castles on the edge of perilous deserts, where from high windows they watched camel caravans passing by, and in listening to their sad

Adelina bells forgot their homes and the people who remembered them.

She was eating chocolates, talking of the summer, but we decided to go out for a walk and sat on the low stone wall of the Pincio gardens, looking down at Rome.

Adelina's hair was plaited and tied with two bows of ribbon—she had round gold earrings and a coral necklace and wore a warm flannel dress ; she looked very pretty and very Roman.

As to-day was the day before the Epiphany we went to the church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli, where on a raised platform a continuous stream of children were reciting poems to the image of the Bambino, who lay in a manger on the other side of the church, arrayed in many gifts of diamonds and pearls and crowned with a crown of gold and precious stones, with the Magi kneeling before Him.

One little girl seemed to know any number of verses, for whenever there was a lull, or a young reciter overcome by nervousness fled away frightened from the platform, she jumped up and began once more, and always a new poem.

Adelina said her verses, the same, she told me, *Adelina* that she had said last year, and after we had walked round the church and had looked at the maze of scaffolding which filled the middle aisle—they were mending the ceiling, and it almost made me wish that no building was ever quite completed—we opened the door and stepped from the dimly lighted church on to the wide flight of marble steps. These were crowded with sellers of toys, cakes, and holy pictures. We stopped to buy one of the Bambino, and then we walked down the steps and slowly up many more to the Capitoline hill, to see the wolves and eagles there.

The wolves looked unhappy ; they are not like the noble animal that fed the heroes of first Rome. The eagles too looked depressed : they are meant to be free, to fly high and strong above the mountain tops. It hurts to see them caged, for bars can also chain the soul and imprison it in despair.

Near them we stood by the statue of Cola di Rienzo. He fought for liberty, and should have died for liberty in all the splendid enthusiasm of his youth. He should have been given a smaller stage to fight on than Rome city, for he had the

Adelina histrionic sense so strongly developed that directly the theatrical merged into the real he failed. Some-one should have been near, watching, who could have rung down the curtain at the right moment; perhaps on the dawn of that night when, clad in armour and alone, he knelt through the dark hours in the church of Sant' Angelo in Pescheria.

We talked about him and about the wolves, and walked slowly through the narrow streets to the golden Tiber; we stood opposite the island, and, watching the colour of the river, I thought of all the heroes of Rome. Often it seemed as if the rushing water spoke of them, as if their faces floated by, peaceful at last.

We left, and walking through the Piazza Mattei saw the tortoise fountain with its mixture of colours wrought on the marble by the falling water of so many years. The marble spoke of age, but the lithe bronze figures of the four boys holding the tortoises above their heads are eternally young; the slight slime that covers them is like the fur coating of a faun, and the dolphins love their burdens.

We went then to a tea-room which was filled with American and English women. Many of

them looked old, tired out, expressionless as if *Adelina* their tragedy lay in never being able to realise one. I said to Adelina, looking at them: "Adelina, where do all the young and happy people go? There are not any here." She laughed and said: "I expect they have all gone to see the cinematograph." So I was forced to say: "If you gobble up that cake quickly we can go too." And we went.

BONA

Bona **I**N a garden in Rome there is a small round temple with open columns ; in the middle of it is a marble pedestal, but there is no statue on it. Has there ever been one, broken now and thrown away ? I do not know, but every time I pass it I wonder.

The temple stands on a little mound ; trees surround it, some of their branches fall on to the cone-shaped roof.

A path, dark even in daytime from overhanging trees, leads to some fountains. Sitting on the steps of the temple you can hear them splashing.

One night in the summer I waited there in the darkness of the trees. Slowly the moon rose ; it shone in a patch of light on the water in the basin of a fountain at the end of the dark walk.

There was no sound but the faint noises of far-away life—it might even have been the breeze in the leaves of the maples, but there was no wind. Everything seemed far away—Rome farther away than all. I could see no lights from where I sat. The trees were enclosing a moment reborn by the light of the

moon from another city, another country, another *Bona* life.

I waited, expecting to see some dainty columbine dancing up the steps, to be helped on to the pillar by a Watteau pierrot, or to find some eighteenth-century goddess posing there in delightfully artificial attitudes ; I thought that even elves, winged like dragon-flies, might cluster about the columns. Surely, I thought, the fairy of the temple too would come ; the night was awaiting her.

Suddenly the bushes below the trees moved, something white crept through them, and, being too hopeful to feel afraid, I waited.

A small figure pushed itself through the branches and stood near me ; it was Bona, my little eight-year-old friend. Her presence there wanted some explanation ; I put her on my knees and heard from her that she had run out of her house and, finding a gate into the gardens open, she made up her mind to go and see the lions in the Zoo. She asked me to go with her, but I told her I was waiting to see the fairy of the temple. This pleased her ; she clapped her

Bona little hands and said: "Yes, yes, let us wait together, and you must tell me about her as we wait." I told her that once some one who did not quite believe in fairies had built a little temple under high trees and near the sound of many singing fountains; in the middle of it he put a small pillar. He said: "When the moon is full I shall watch by my temple, and if there are such things as fairies who care for woods or gardens I shall surely see one who will be tempted to come and live in the little temple I have built, and who, seeing the pedestal there waiting for her to stand on, will come and make it her home."

Bona said quickly: "Did the fairy come?" I had to say that I did not know and that I thought the man had waited many years and then had gone away, but no one knew if he had seen the fairy or no. She suggested that perhaps he had been nearly blind and did not know that he could not see anything. She put her finger on her mouth, saying: "Hush, we must be quiet and not speak," and thus we waited for some time.

Later the moonlight fell in a ray from between

the trees right on to the pillar : I lifted up Bona *Bona* and put her on it.

She stood there in a white fluffy dress, very short ; it showed her brown knees and legs, she wore white socks and shoes. Her long straight black hair fell round her—some of it was tied on each side of her face with large bows of dark ribbon ; she held her white straw hat in her hand. Suddenly she dropped it and raised up her arms towards the moon—her eyes were filled with the light of it and she was smiling. In her I had found the fairy of the temple, and in the amazement of delight I ran toward her and stood by her also in the light. I lifted her down and put her on the steps and knelt by her. “ Bona, did you too see a fairy in the moonbeam, did you really see one too ? ”

I thought she seemed a little frightened, as with a slight shudder she came quite close to me and put her arms round my neck. She looked into my eyes and said : “ No, no, I did not see her, but you did, I know. I know because your eyes look as if you had seen her, and I am frightened because I did not see her too.”

MARCO PEPE

Marco Pepe **M**ARCO PEPE looked very old, too old to be able to work ; but, except for the hours in which he slept in the shadow of the rocks during the heat of the day, he was always busy. Often I watched him when he put some gunpowder under the limestone boulders ; he fired it with a fuse and then ran to hide till the report was over, when he would go back to pick up the various bits and carry them to the limestone kiln at which he worked.

When the sun had set and the valleys looked dark blue and the mountains a pale violet, I walked from the steep hill to the road, and stopped half-way to the valley, from where I could look down into the forest of chestnut-trees and watch the waterfall, whose waters far below were lost in spray.

Marco Pepe was always near his kiln, and sometimes we talked. Once I asked him the name of a village high up away from everything, and when he told me what it was called, he added : “They are bad people up there ; they kill each other for love and hate.”

I said : "Tell me about them, Marco Pepe, *Marco Pepe* and tell me why you say that they are bad."

He then told me this story :

A few years ago, in that village there was a beautiful young girl called Maddalena. She and her parents and brothers and sisters lived outside the village, and not in the usual house built of stone, but in a cottage made of wood and thatched with dried branches of birch-trees. The cottage had only one room, and, this being very small, the beds were built one above the other as they are in the cabins of ships. Maddalena was engaged to a young man called Giovanni, and as he was in a much better position than she was the neighbours thought she was a lucky girl because he had asked to marry her. Maddalena was pleased that the other girls envied her. One day Maddalena and Giovanni quarrelled: he had been jealous of a look that she had given to Giuseppe, a sailor who had just returned to the village. They parted angrily at sunset, and, when the moon rose, Giovanni, who had hidden himself near to the cottage where Maddalena lived, saw her standing at the door. He saw that out of the

Marco Pepe shadow of a wall crept Giuseppe and stood by her ; he saw that Giuseppe bent down and kissed her on her lips. She had never let Giovanni kiss her like that ; but Maddalena loved Giuseppe best.

All the next day Giovanni was not seen at his work, and when the sun set he did not return to his home. When the moon rose he was once more near Maddalena's home, hiding in a ditch near to a hedge ; with him was his friend Mario, and both Giovanni and Mario held guns in their hands.

They waited till every one had entered the cottage ; they saw that the door was shut and the light put out, and when all was silent they crept out of their hiding-place. Giovanni gathered together some straw and put it by the door, and at each corner of the cottage he built up a small rick which reached the roof. He set fire to these and stood facing the door with his loaded gun at his shoulder ; Mario knelt on one knee near to the window.

The smoke and the crackling noise woke those inside, and they tore down the door and

the shutter of the window. Their distorted faces *Marco Pepe* appeared and disappeared through the smoke ; tongues of flame licked at their arms, which were stretched out trying to fight with the fire ; but, as each half-seen figure appeared on the threshold, Giovanni shot off his gun. No one escaped by the door. There had been only one face at the window, and that was Maddalena's ; but she had fallen back into the yellow glare as soon as her terror-struck eyes had seen her lover's friend. In the morning there was hardly anything left to mark the place where all this had happened, but there was planted a horror in the hearts of all those who heard the story that in all their lives they can never forget.

When Marco Pepe had finished speaking I said to him : " Was this really, really true ? " " Yes," he answered, " quite true, and I knew the girl." Then, pointing down to a detached hill in the valley, he continued : " There, on that hill is the prison where those who did this thing now rot their lives away." After this we did not speak. I looked and I saw that from the prison they could see the sun setting over their village ; it

Marco Pepe must look to their eyes as if it were disappearing in fire every night.

The cicale had stopped singing, the crickets had not yet begun their song, but from the marshes came the sound of the croaking of frogs.

Marco Pepe took from his pocket some goat-milk cheese and a piece of bread ; he began to eat his supper.

The village far above us was lost in darkness. I looked again at the gloomy building on the hill in the valley below ; its walls seemed to be crushing live men.

Over the mountains in the distance the young moon rose on a dreaming world.

A GIRL DOCTOR

SHE heard I was alone, so she said she would *A Girl*
come and stay with me for a little time. *Doctor*

All day she was busy, and in her spare moments was writing down the experiments she was making with stovaine : she was very wise and clever, and beyond that just a happy, healthy girl.

It was July ; we slept on my roof, she in one corner, I in another, on camp beds, wrapped up in blankets.

Often she would come back long after I had gone to sleep. I went to bed early so as to wake with the dawn, the bells of Ave Maria and the first song of the birds. You can hear all this through an open window, but it is quite a different thing to wake to these things under the sky, as we know who have seen the moon pale before the soft green light of day.

There were moonless nights too, those I loved most, when the stars shone above me in the relentless blue of space. I watched them, nothing between them and me—no cloud even—I had no thought away from them ; they were my sole

A Girl consciousness, my existence, till I lost myself in
Doctor them and slept. Often I would wake, as happy people wake, trembling with joy to know they were still shining, all further across the heavens, but still there ; and I would lie awake to see them fading into dawn, like pale spirits half reluctant, yet withdrawing before a light they feared.

I put out my arms to them and said : “Stay, stay ; the light of your cold unlidged eyes is dearer to me than all the warm glow of the sun !” but when the world grew gold from his rays I forgot the stars and begged the sun never to set. Yet we feel we share the sun with all the world, and how few have lived with the stars !

How many have written of night, because, being racked with passion, the mystery of darkness drew a cry from their hearts ! But it is only when free of human love, broken by human treachery, that we can give to night what it asks—an utter annihilation of self, for then we are not distracted by weaving the loveliness of existence round some human soul.

One night a storm raged. We had to tie our bedding to our beds : the little orange-trees lost

two oranges, one fell on to my bed, one was blown into the piazza below. Clouds were torn across the sky ; I felt giddy watching them, they flew so fast, they passed over the moon as if smoke was belching out of a furnace of burning worlds. All night I did not sleep, I watched the storm and the shapes of the clouds. Sometimes below the angry dark masses and so much nearer the world a little white cloud crept by ; sometimes the sky was clear, and I wondered if I saw the Milky Way or a torn grey mist caught amongst the stars.

The girl doctor slept long after Rome had waked up ; I went from my corner to where she was, from where I could see all Rome. My roof is like the deck of a monster vessel which is for ever sailing towards Rome—into Rome. Gazing down at the houses below I expected them to move aside as water parts before the prow of a ship, and when the wind blows a gale this feeling is intensified. She lay on her camp-bed wrapped in brown blankets. Her long black hair was in two plaits ; often one plait had fallen right down to the ground, and her arm fell with it, showing the

A Girl purple wrapper which she wore, while the other
Doctor plait lay like a black snake on the coverlet, as long as herself. She was wonderfully a part of the morning ; asleep there she looked like a princess of some forgotten land, and when she woke and sat up her face underneath the heavy masses of her dark hair smiled rose-red with health.

She had a boy-like way of blurting out medical facts—not always pleasant ones—but in everything she said you felt the delicate reserve of her nature. She came originally from New England, and that explained much of her Quakerlike charm. She knew about the diseases of the body and about some of the diseases of the soul too, but her knowledge was in no way knowledge of life, her clear dark eyes were those of a child and she was like a child in any real understanding of life. She merely could not believe that evil is as universal as the world loves to prove it is—it was below her comprehension.

She has been swept away by broad-winged love, away from Rome, far away, and I am happy in her happiness.

IL VECCHIO

HE is not as other beggars are—he does not *Il Vecchio* ask alms, he demands them.

Very old, bent, very dirty, he yet has something commanding in his voice; his call is never the whine of disillusionment, but a statement of poverty.

For some months I took my midday meal always at a *trattoria* on a deserted hill overlooking the Palatine, from where beyond its ruins one can see the Valhalla on the top of San Giovanni in Laterano, and, further again, the Campagna and the Apennines, a wide valley and then the Alban hills. Guides bring tourists up there, they call the view “a panorama,” and point out places of interest; and the people, thinking of what to order for luncheon and wondering what they will see next, vaguely murmur: “How beautiful, how lovely!” Sometimes one will stand up and talk so wisely about dates and facts that the others will listen, quite forgetting that it is the colour and the sunshine and the desolate beauty of the Campagna and its surrounding hills

Il Vecchio that make Rome what no other city in the world can ever be. They are too busy trying to learn to be able either to see or to hear. Rome speaks always, but only to those who seek knowledge, not through books, but by life and its dreams.

Almost at the door of this place lives the Vecchio. We made friends the first time that I climbed the hill, when he said to me in an angry voice : "You must give me something ; I have had a bad day."

When I first saw him he was standing by the high wall which hides a field from the road. He and the wall seemed one, one in colour and also in the appearance of crumbling age ; over him hung some branches of apple blossom—the sky above them was a pale midday blue.

The blossoms grew into apples, were picked, the trees lost their leaves ; the Vecchio never changed, he stood there always the same, only that sometimes in the hot days of August he slept, and unless one passed him in a carriage, when the noise of the wheels would rouse him, he

often did not wake up. His cap was put in front *Il Vecchio* of him and mutely requested what the owner, awake, thought right to demand.

Some one told me that it was wrong to give him anything as he probably bought wine with any money he had, but if one can give him dreams, why not? If he were asking for apple-blossoms and clouds would any one refuse to give them to him? And perhaps he finds his spring in red wine and yellow.

I had been away from Rome for a few weeks; he noticed this when a few days ago I saw him for the first time since my return. He met me with, "Well, where have you been?" So I meekly said: "Away." He looked disapprovingly at me and said: "I cannot think why people want to gad; here you have the sunshine, isn't that enough for you?"

I put a little more than I usually do into his cap; he said, "A lira, dear me!" shuffled away quickly without saying anything more and sat by the wall murmuring to himself.

He is so old that sometimes when I come round the bend of the road and do not see him I

Il Vecchio am afraid. It would pain me if he were no longer there. He is bent with age, but when the apple-trees blossom rose-pink over his head he seems to be a part of the spring.

GIUSEPPE : MARIO : ANTONIO :
ALBERTO

IT was a hot afternoon in summer. The cicale *Giuseppe*
had sung me to sleep and the little stream *Mario*
which ran near to where I was lying had waked *Antonio*
me by a sudden extra gurgle of its waters. *Alberto*

I heard voices and saw four little boys walking through the wood. As I was hidden by high ferns they could not see me, and I lazily watched them coming towards the stream. They were from a near village, and I recognised Giuseppe, Mario, Antonio, and Alberto. None of them had reached the age of ten and the youngest, Mario, was only five years old. Their clothes were dirty and in tatters ; their parents I knew were poor.

They sat down on the grass not far from me. Giuseppe stated that there are ships on the sea as big as houses. The other three laughed : " As big as houses, silly ; you mean as big as your mother's attic." Giuseppe stuck to his point and said he had a sailor cousin who actually lived on one. Antonio, who seemed to be a little sleepy, said he had seen something more wonderful than

Giuseppe ships as big as houses, he had seen a picture of a
Mario train climbing up a steep hill. This no one
Antonio believed was really possible, not even Antonio
Alberto himself, and he was, I think, sorry that he had
mentioned it as a wonder of the world.

Alberto said that he was at any rate going to see everything ; he meant to go as far as America, he meant to be a sailor. Giuseppe turned to him : " A sailor, why your mother told my mother that you are going to be a priest." Alberto leant forward and hit Giuseppe in the face, saying : " But father says there aren't going to be any priests by the time I grow up."

Mario all this time had slowly undressed himself ; he stood naked with one foot in the water, one arm lifted up, balancing himself. The other three, seeing him, also hurried to undress, throwing about their clothes anyhow, anywhere, and when quite naked all four, holding hands, prepared to go into the deeper water of a pool. The water was nowhere above their waists ; they splashed about in it and hit it with their hands so as to make sparkles and upward-flying jets. Through the leaves of the chestnut-trees the sun

fell here and there on to their slight brown limbs, on to the grass, on to the water. They were not any longer little boys but young fauns who had returned to the woods ; they had forgotten the village and the fact that there was a world to conquer and to see ; their world was in the present moment and they were living it to the full, laughing with delight.

*Giuseppe
Mario
Antonio
Alberto*

Antonio jumped on to the grass and ran towards a bush covered with red berries ; he picked some branches of it and carried them pressed tight against his brown skin and put them on to the ground near to where the others were playing. They came out of the water and sat down by him and, using long grasses for string, each made a wreath for himself of the berries and their leaves. Giuseppe finished his first, and holding it in his hand he walked again into the stream and stood in the running water. His hair was dark auburn and curly and as he stood still and straight, with his arms raised, crowning himself with the berries, he looked like a young god. A slight breeze made the sun-patches appear to be large golden butterflies lazily moving on the

Giuseppe water and on the leaves and grass. Giuseppe
Mario went to where his clothes lay and took from his
Antonio pocket a knife, with which he whittled at some
Alberto reeds to make a flute from them. When it was finished he blew through it and pretended to play on it, moving his fingers quickly up and down ; his song was in the minor key, a faun melody, but the sound was of his own making ; the green flute was delightful to look at in his red and blowing mouth, but it was quite dumb.

He marched down the middle of the stream followed by the other three ; they stamped on the water with their feet, splashing it on either side into a shower of sun-caught drops. They were lost to sight in a bend of the stream and the wood was silent of human sounds. The cicale never stopped singing ; lizards crept out, amongst them a few little tailless vanquished ones ; not far from me some dead leaves moved, a snake crawled out from under them and gleamed greener than the grass into which it disappeared again.

The children were away for some time when suddenly in a sun-patch I saw again the four standing close together looking upwards. Alberto

was pointing out a large bird that was flying slowly above them. When they were quite close I called out to Antonio: "Come here, all of you, and sit near me—I will give you something you like."

*Giuseppe
Mario
Antonio
Alberto*

They were not in the least surprised nor did they become self-conscious. Antonio said: "I know what it is, it's the peppermints you give the babies after school." They sat down by me in the midst of the fern; Mario took off his wreath and put it round his fat baby waist. I put a honeysuckle flower behind each of his small ears. The others remained crowned. I handed them some figs, and as they crushed them between their lips the purple juice fell on to their naked limbs. Then we talked of the ways of lizards, dragonflies, grasshoppers, and frogs.

SEVERINA

Severina

ALL the drinking water for the rock-village where I spent some time in the summer had to be brought to it from a well which was two miles away : there were always some women walking up and down the steep hill-side carrying water in copper pots on their heads.

Many of them went at the same time, gossiping and laughing, going down the hill swinging easily as they walked, but they talked much less coming up again and walked quite slowly.

Severina brought water to my tower twice a day, and sometimes I went down to the well with her when she fetched it, where we would sit and talk with the others who were there.

The well was not quite in the valley though it was far below the village : below it again was a steep gorge through which a river splashed, but we could only hear a faint murmur from the water below—there was always such a chattering round the well.

Severina and I sat on a plank of wood which some workmen had left there ; she always brushed

away the dust with her petticoat before I sat down. She asked me many questions ; why I had stopped in Italy in the summer when so many strangers leave, why did I not wish to see any one but contadini, and many things about the English climate, and whether it was true that London was nearly always in a fog. *Severina*

I told her that the sun sometimes shone there through a mist, which made the ugly streets look like fairy walks. I told her that why I liked my village friends was because I loved the earth, and that she and the others I knew there were like flowers growing out of the very heart of the ground, and that through them I felt as if I heard the earth speaking and breathing. I said to her : “ Severina, when you and your babies stand together—a little group—and I see behind you the hills glowing like opals in the hot sun, I wonder if it was from millions of people like you that those hills were made, or if one burning mountain gave birth to such a thing as you.”

In the evening, after bringing up the water, she climbed the rickety stairs which led to my roof and sat there near me with Alfredo, her

Severina youngest child, in her arms, feeding him and talking to me. He was not well all that time ; the heat had upset him, he was fretful and pushed away her breast and then cried ; nothing seemed to satisfy or please him. Often there were tears in her eyes, she was tired out ; she was so restless for many nights she did not sleep enough, and at dawn her work began. Twice a week she walked to Olevano, to the market there ; that took up the whole day. Alfredo lay in the empty basket, which she carried on her head going down the hill ; coming back he shared it with the butter and groceries, and when he did not keep still it made the uphill journey very tiring for her.

She had a small vineyard, and that meant work too. When she had spent the day there she always came back tired out—too tired to cook anything ; then they supped on bread soaked in wine, she only stopped for a few minutes to talk to me, and went to bed whilst I was still watching the sunset.

On Sundays and feast-days she wore bright green stays outside her white blouse ; her skirt

was of deep mauve cotton patterned with a *Severina* design in green flowers ; it was very full, and at the bottom was sewn a wide band of cherry-coloured ribbon—she wore, too, her coral necklace and earrings. All these things were given her when, after the birth of her first child, she had gone to be wet-nurse to a rich Roman family.

Those days of grandeur had in no way impressed her : she told me that all the time she longed for her own baby, her mountain village, and her freedom. She was not meant to serve, but she was pleased with the gifts they gave her. Like many of the women of that village she had light brown hair, sun-dyed in places almost into gold : however badly she screwed it up it always looked pretty, as all the loose bits curled like vine tendrils. Her eyes were a clear blue and over them she had no control, they showed everything she felt : pleasure, disappointment, greed, anger, sorrow—all spoke through her eyes. What her words were did not matter, I looked at her eyes and knew the truth. She did my marketings, and sometimes we had little

Severina discussions about the matter : her explanations were plausible, and though I saw quite well what had really happened, how could I complain to eyes that said, "Well, there were more eggs, but the children like them, and they are often hungry" ?

One night I was frightened by the terrible shrieking and crying which I heard in the narrow lane under my window ; I felt certain some one was being murdered, and ran down to *Severina's* house, which was on the archway leading to my door. She came out and went with me to see what had happened ; by that time many others had come out too. Suddenly a girl rushed out of a house, her hair half torn down, her eyes wild, her clothes in disorder ; she was cursing, saying horrible things—she appeared to be mad. After her came, equally uncontrolled, an older woman. The girl turned round and faced her ; they both stood ready to spring at each other, when some of the neighbours caught hold of the older woman and forced her back into the house. Just then a young man crept sheepishly out of the door and spoke to the girl, who by then was lying flat on

the ground, hitting it with her fists and sobbing *Severina* loudly.

The girl and the man were husband and wife, the woman was the man's mother ; they all lived together.

Some one had given the girl a little money, with which she had bought some polenta which she and her husband had eaten out in the fields. The mother had heard of this, and when they came in from work she abused the girl, beat her, and said she was persuading her son to ill-treat his mother and deceive her ; no polenta had been brought back for her, and if she had not been informed by some one who had seen the girl buying it she would not have even known that they had bought it. No one laughed when they heard the reason ; no one who had heard their screams or seen their faces could have laughed.

Severina told me many stories of the saint of our place, and stories of the saints who had lived in villages near. Once a year she went to pray to the miraculous picture of the Madonna del Buon Consiglio at Genazzano ; she persuaded me to go there too, and came down to the post-cart with me to see that I really started.

Severina It was on one of the hottest days of August ; the post-cart left at midday, and I did not at all like leaving my hill-top for the valleys. We drove for many miles through woods : on one side was a plain, then the Alban hills ; on the other side, between the hills, we saw the mountains of the Abruzzi ; and nearer, on the hills in the vales, many mediæval-looking villages.

Through the deep green of the chestnut-trees we saw below us the blue-grey haze of olive leaves ; there was no movement of life, every one slept, but the air was filled with sound, rising and falling in rhythmic waves, continuous, monotonous, marvellous, the singing of millions of cicale—it was as if all the leaves of all the trees were purring with joy at the heat of the sun.

After passing San Vito, where the view of my village is the most wonderful of all—one sees it in the distance, standing high and solitary on its detached limestone ridge—the road began to descend, and below me I saw another small steep hill, on which stood the beautiful old town of Genazzano, where the first thing that I noticed was a castle of the Colonna. I left the post-cart and

crossed the drawbridge leading to it, and stood by *Severina* the well in the large courtyard. It cannot be much altered since the days when knights rode in armour : I could so easily imagine I saw people leaning from the high loggia on the first floor, and speaking to a group of riders sitting on restless horses whose hoofs rang on the stones of the yard, the clanking noise mingling with the softer sound of armour being unbuckled, and with the loud voices of people talking. Now the castle is let out in apartments.

I walked from there to the church and found the sacristan ; the only other person there was an old beggar-man kneeling and saying his rosary.

I learnt that I could not see the picture by merely opening the iron gate of the small chapel where it was, and that when it is uncovered there must be a priest present and a short service. After some time a priest arrived followed by an acolyte who carried a censer with incense ; the heavy brass doors in front of the picture were let down and we all knelt.

Severina had said that all the time that the picture

Severina was exposed I must ask for what I most wanted, but I could only think that I was glad to see the small dark face of the Madonna of the picture, and that I was glad also that there were difficulties to surmount before she could be seen. *Severina*, on my return, said that the mere fact of going there and hoping, even if one did not know for what one hoped, was a good thing and she was glad that I had gone.

When I was leaving the village to return to my home in Rome, she stood by the carriage to say good-bye to me, holding *Alfredo* in her arms ; *Maria*, *Giuseppe*, and *Serafina* were clinging to her skirts. She stood by the ruins of an ancient wall, some of its bricks had fallen in masses on to the ground and lay there half crumbled into earth again. I thought how inevitably the ground draws back to herself all that has come from her—*Persepolis* or a blade of grass.

The wind blew aside *Severina*'s skirts and showed her bare feet ; *Alfredo*'s red lips were pressed against her firm brown breast ; *Maria* was a little patch of dull rose cotton ; *Giuseppe* held his small black cap in his hand ; *Serafina*'s

pale yellow hair was blowing about her face. *Severina*
The ancient wall, the hills, the limestone rocks
melted away from my sight—I saw before me
something that was eternal.

RUSSIA

THE ONE WHO IS A STRANGER STILL

I MET her in the train when travelling between Vienna and Baku ; for five days we sat facing each other. We tried to read, it was not easy ; we tried to look out of the window, the steadily falling sleet prevented us from seeing anything, but we could feel that outside lay the pitiless undulating steppes.

*The one who
is a Stranger
still*

I watched her—she was young, her face told of sleepless nights, and nights and days of pain, and she never smiled. There was a simple quietness in her movements that spoke of despair. I wondered—at last we spoke.

She told me that she was returning to an old castle in the Caucasus ; it belonged to her, she had lived there as a happy girl with her mother. Some years before when her mother died she had gone to London and Paris to relations there, she had married an Englishman and had been very unhappy ; she had left him a few months before, and was then returning to her mountains to be alone once more, to try to forget all that she had

*The one who
is a Stranger
still*

learnt. She said she had known great sorrow and that it had taught her nothing good. Her name was Wanda. I can remember some of the things we said.

Wanda. I had not wished to see life as it is. People had always told me that I was an idealist, that it was not possible for me to live in the world of people. I now agree with them. To live with the world it is necessary to believe evil of every one, to guard yourself from every one through this belief, to think every woman is an enemy, to feel that everything you have, youth, looks, brain, and charm, is so much counted against you in any judgment of your actions.

Y. I cannot agree with you ; surely it is the young and the pretty women who have all that is best of life, people are kind to them for no other reason than to see them happy.

W. I vaguely remember thinking as you think, and seeing life as you still do, reflected on a cloud. To me now it appears to be the real Medusa head, and those who have once been forced to see it as it is are turned into stone : they cannot even remember what they felt before, they

only know that its face is most horrible and that from soft hair and flesh grow worms.

*The one who
is a Stranger
still*

X. Yes, from flesh they grow, but what of the soul? What will grow from that when through the earth it escapes, as I believe it will, into space?

W. You say you believe—you mean you hope. Who can answer the question whether it is an escape or an end? Surely the last attitude to life of all philosophers is with hands on knees gazing stone-eyed in amazement; and this after their years of hoping to point a way.

X. A way, yes, to reach the secret which we all seek, some through love, some through renunciation. Surely this desire of all to search must mean that there is something to discover, or is it only the wish to share the ghastly solitude of the soul which drives people on as if looking for a thing that they have lost? I wonder if for each soul there is a brother somewhere, and if those who have found it have peace from restlessness. Perhaps it is for that we all seek: it is not love as people understand it, but something greater than friendship, and it has as its basis that too often

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quoted and little understood saying, "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner."

W. As to that, to understand all and to pardon all simply means that one has reached that height of philosophy when one no longer cares about anything. I have, I think, known the human soul—I understand, I pardon, but it is the negation of love for humanity, an end to striving, and I loathe myself for understanding and not hating ; I only pardon because I despise too much to hate. Only the people who will not understand any view of life but their own, and who cannot pardon, are able to do some good in the world ; they strive to alter, and change often means advance. With me it is because I have seen it all and, in a measure, understand life as a whole that I can no longer live in a world of people like myself. We have left the real things of life and have lost ourselves in a maze of sensations which we cannot wholly comprehend and which leave us afraid and wearied out. The ordinary woman of the world, unless she has been able to harden herself—in which case she becomes the least attractive of all the animals—lives in a state of petty mental

torture ; petty because it is unnecessary that jealousies about lovers or clothes should be a source of irritation to a rational being who could find life only delight. Women have had their emancipation before they are ready for it ; the greater number have not yet learnt the meaning of comradeship, they are not any nearer to the knowledge of some of the facts which they must grasp before freedom can be a pleasure to them. I believe that even now, if you offered women the advantages of a guarded harem life—the real life of a harem, dull but sheltered—that ten out of a hundred would say that it was preferable to the drudgery of a lonely life working for a living.

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is a Stranger
still*

X. Are you quite fair in what you say ? Is it not only from bitterness that you speak like this ? I feel it is not you, your real self. Bitter and cynical people are those who have no initiative, who are commonplace and unoriginal in their ideas—utterly unlike you. They are willing to believe that the world is evil because most people say that it is so, and they repeat this platitude as if it were a fact, or they are not able to dig down deep

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enough to see the good—the good of the world that is so real because it is in the earth itself, and it is through love of it that we learn love for humanity and see the hope that lies beneath the evil.

W. I have done with visionaries and with hope ; I now see facts, and they are all brutal ones. I see only the eternal fight between the sexes, the eternal enmity of man to woman and the treachery of woman to woman which makes that enmity so powerful. I have no religion to blind me to these facts, not even what you have—a love of all religions. I believe in a future life only in that perhaps somewhere there will be some perfect moment to make us forget these imperfect hours ; but I hardly think that one's actions here can in any way affect an after-life—if there is one.

X. Perhaps not, but I think that this life is important, and that perhaps here we are meant to grow and use a soul for this life's use, and we make a mistake in thinking that this impulse to good is for later on and for another life. I often think that the truth of Hegel's saying in answer to that hideous aphorism, " No man is a hero to

his valet," "Nicht aber darum weil dieser kein *The one who*
Held ist, sondern weil jener der Kammerdiener *is a Stranger*
ist," is true of life : it is those who complain of it *still*
who cannot rise to an appreciation of it. We
forget that it is from God, and perhaps He waits
smiling and pitying to see what we do with this
great gift of living, which so often we distort for
ourselves and others into pain by asking of it a
further meaning than the wonderful fact that it is.
We should be content to leave our souls in His
hand and smiling to thank Him for His flowers.
Is not the earth God-given and holy, and is she
not as great as are the sky and its stars and all its
suns? Is there not remoteness and mystery enough
in her eternally burning entrails, is she not herself
a part of all that we gaze up to in such awe? We
think to find God in the sky when perhaps He is
hidden with the roots in darkness.

W. Yes, perhaps you are right, and we ought
to worship the earth as men have worshipped the
sun—as some still do. Have you seen the fisher-
men on the Adriatic who even now at dawn salute
the rising sun with "Buon Giorno, Santo Sole"?
I have been out with them fishing and shall never

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forget the first time I heard them saying this. A calm sea, the horizon lost in haze and through it the sun appearing low in the sky ; a group of dark fine men with bare arms and legs standing on the deck of a paranza, motionless for a moment facing the new light, the red sails flapping gently, the sea not yet blue. . . .

We talked of many things.

Five days in a Russian train may be in friendship like five years in a great city. On the last day she said :

W. I suppose some of us are honest with ourselves, those who have a sense of humour must be ; it is an unfailing source of amusement to analyse one's own actions as well as those of other people. Do you think that women are ever frank with each other ? To men they never are, at least not with regard to the feelings in which they are most like them.

Y. I think they are sometimes quite frank with each other, but they have to be exceptional characters and without a trace of that worst of all faults—suspiciousness.

W. What a boring thing that is! I have no patience with any one who looks for a meaning in every word and action other than what appears to be. I wonder, though, if it would be possible for any one to write or say quite accurately what is the reason for anything they have said or done. I know that any one with the artist nature is incapable of writing down any thought exactly as it passed through the mind, and though the saving strength of those with such a nature is that their tears fall into delightful words, the words cannot express in all truth the reason of the tears. Beautiful thoughts must in a sense be vague ones, and though not vaguely expressed certainly cannot all be discovered and tableted. If a book of soul revelation is written by an artist I read it only as a story, the real truth can only be read in the face and in the eyes.

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X. Yes. I think too it is not possible for any one to be honest in writing of their real feelings, considering a thousand lives may be the cause of one action. However, perhaps one day some one who realises that there is practically no difference in the character of man and woman may

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write one moment of his own or another's life, and with some truth. It will, I suppose, have to be in a hundred volumes giving all the reasons for that moment's action.

How strange it is that when people hear of any particularly mean or despicable action done by a woman they say: "How like a woman!" Women are no weaker than men in any of the frailties of humanity; their faults are mostly faults of uncontrolled jealousy which two or three generations of real interests and freedom would eradicate, and men are almost as often pettily jealous of each other, only they have learned to hide their feelings better.

I prefer to be with men because from habit and training their interests are more concentrated and deeper, and their point of view of life is wider, so that one can learn much from them; but with regard to their weaknesses I do not find they are less ignoble than those usually attributed to women.

W, I am glad that you have at least learnt that; so often idealists weave illusions only about the opposite sex.

X. I am no idealist. I believe in good because *The one who is a Stranger still* I have seen as much of it as of evil, and I know that by believing evil we create evil, and I prefer to be deceived a hundred times in thinking evil is good than once in thinking good is evil: the faults you complain of in people are generally only surface faults, and in any case people do not enter into my real life. I have always found happiness in nature, and have learnt at last to feel a complete indifference to human judgments, seeing they are invariably biassed, seldom logical, and usually the outcome of a mood, not of serious thought. But in spite of this I love human beings and care to be with them.

W. My only idea is to hide from them—from those that I have known. I have found them more bestial than the beasts, and less lovable. I mean to live near people from whom I expect nothing, not with any hope of the re-birth of my ideals, but to try to make the days less black for some of those for the drudgery of whose lives we are all responsible. I have learnt nothing through my pain, but when I see a beggar cold and hungry I know that he must share my coat, that he must

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have half my bread, because I too have understood what it is to cry out : " Is it nothing to you, all ye who pass by ? " and have found it is—nothing.

I asked her no questions, her face was very pale, and as she spoke the candle in the lantern above the carriage door guttered and went out. Through the snow mists the moon shone faintly ; there was a shadow on her face, but I could see her mouth, which was tremulous. I stood by her and said : " Wanda, I feel we shall always be strangers to each other, but also we are nearer than brothers are. You hate, you have always hated, your disillusionment began with your birth ; I love, I shall always love, yes, even though I see the evil as clearly as you do, but I know that the secret of good is love. We are both seeking and we shall always and against our wills be near each other, striving to find—you through my love of life, I through your hate of it—what the Secret is."

A HUNGARIAN

PEOPLE had always described Baku in such *A Hungarian* a lurid manner to me that I vaguely imagined a town with houses floating on canals of oil, where if one struck a match one ran the risk of starting a fire which would last for years. I imagined that the smell of naphtha was overpowering, and that the Caspian was a sea of oil, so when nearing it in the train I expected to enter the fifth chasm of the Inferno. However, instead of finding anything either horrible or beautiful, we arrived at a railway station very much like any other, but that it had outside something of the appearance of the Alhambra in London, and on the steps leading to it were standing and lying many men belonging to almost every race under the sun.

Trustingly I gave my keys and papers to a dapper little Frenchman who said he was an interpreter, and then climbed into a small open carriage to which were harnessed two strong young horses, who dashed off the moment I sat down.

The driver was dressed as Russian drivers are and took up more room than there was seat ; his

A Hungarian full-skirted coat bulged over on either side, his leather waist-belt made me think of the bands used with machinery, it was apparently endless.

The streets were wide, paved with cobbles, and we clattered over them; the houses were like those of any mining town in America or South Africa, dull two-storey buildings. Here and there one more flourishing than the rest had ornaments on the windows and the gates. The air was fresh and clear, a strong wind blew, and as we came near to the sea I saw that the waves were breaking roughly on a clean, pebbled shore.

At last we stopped in front of an insignificant-looking house and went in to find—as if it were the first surprise of the East—a large place with a courtyard in which trees were growing. The hotel was filled with men; very few women travel in that part of the world, and all the men were travelling on business. Traders going to Bokhara and Samarkand, merchants of the Eastern Trading Company, silkworm dealers, Armenians, Tartars, people of all kinds, and all apparently busy either discussing affairs or writing in the

large room which was used as reading-room, bar, *A Hungarian* and sitting-room.

The day after my arrival I was lazily turning over the pages of a book, sitting in this room, when suddenly I heard a few words of Hungarian and looked behind me to see a very old man speaking to a younger one near him. I said to him: "It is good in such a strange place to hear that language." He rose as I spoke and came to where I sat—he looked proud and dignified, a Hungarian of the truest type; he bowed and presented himself, telling me his name. He then sat down and we talked about Hungary: he told me where he lived, I told him of the place where I was born; he had known people I had cared for, I knew the mountain castle which was his home. He was on his way to see some forests on the other side of the Caspian, I was on my way to Persia; we were both stopped by the gale from being able to cross—no ships could leave the harbour.

I had been up the hill in the town to see the bazaars, and had also wandered about the streets looking at the European shops, which were filled

A Hungarian with expensive and abominable things—extremely high-heeled boots with garish leather tops, gramophones in cases on which were painted naked women, over-ornamented German silver, jewelry twisted into every kind of unpleasant form—all the horrors that are ousting the things which come from the East. I looked at it all with the delight I feel sometimes in real ugliness, the delight of extreme surprise. It was the same seeking for the unexpected and fearful which led me later on in Persia to spend a whole afternoon in a country house near Tīhrán, a house entirely furnished with things which if one had carefully chosen them only for their expensive hideousness could not have been gathered together with more complete success. There were tables of the shape of modern Louis XV. made in brass and inlaid with china plaques, vases on which nymphs floated twisted around with azure scarves, life-sized animals in bronze painted in the colours of nature holding trays in their mouths or beaks, electric fire-lamps like fans, made of brass and copper mixed, chandeliers of china, glass, and silver ; and on the tables were large plush books

with the word "Album" printed in gold on *A Hungarian* them.

The population of Baku is wilder and rougher than almost anywhere else in the world, though because of an able governor they say it has much improved during the last year or two. Only a few months before I was there the room in which I slept on the ground floor of the hotel had been entered by burglars, who had killed the night-porter and had injured other people. In the hotel now there is always a Cossack on guard at night ; with the sunset he appears and stands, an immobile sentinel, in his attractive uniform.

I had seen some pitiful sights in the streets—men lying drunk on the pavements, women who looked hunted, a fight where knives had been drawn. My old friend was horrified to hear that I had walked about alone, and when he asked if he could take me to see the oil-fields I was delighted and said "Yes."

We found a pair of fast-trotting horses and a driver who was bigger and fatter and more magnificent than the others, and we started off at a quick trot for the nearest oil-field.

A Hungarian We drove by the sea-front, which had a promenade like one in an English seaside place, but the people walking on it were dressed in garments of colours and shapes that one does not see further west than Baku.

We stopped, as I wanted to see the crowd, it was so intensely diverse. Women in the latest Parisian clothes, if not Parisian taste, were walking by men in Cossack uniforms ; Tartars were moving slowly and proudly, and various groups of people from the Caucasus passed by in the splendid clothes of their country. Nomad women shuffled past, their figures clearly showing as the strong wind blew their scanty clothes tight round them. Some men came by wearing Persian hats, and many Armenians carried gaily-worked carpets filled with their belongings or merchandise. All their faces were so different, their lives so varied, we could have waited there looking at them and at the harbour where the ships were sheltering from the storm for hours longer ; but there were the oil-fields to see and the wind was unpleasant, so we drove on.

At last we came near to what in the distance I had thought was a wood of giant cypresses. We

drove through the forest of black shafts, on roads black from oozing oil, till we came to a small hill above them, and looked through them as through stems of monster trees at the angry green sea covered with floating spume.

To me, then, the oil-fields seemed to be one of the most beautiful products of human hands : square black towers, ending in small hooded tops, rising at irregular intervals to a great height from the ground, filled with machinery—a man-created thing at last, not an imitation of nature ; instruments probing the earth, drawing up her essence to light the evenings of simple men's firesides. It must be splendid to see an oil-well burning, when the earth's blood flames into uncontrolled life and men are powerless to quench the fire of her hate of them.

Leaning against a wall trying to get shelter from the wind, we stood looking at the vivid colour of everything in the sun, at the black towers standing against the green sea, at the utter desolation of the surrounding land, half stupefied with astonishment at the monstrous beauty of all we saw.

We drove back by a road over a plain, and in the

A Hungarian distance saw other great human-built forests, and caught here and there glimpses of the sea.

That evening we dined together, and my old friend told me of his life and about his children. He said they had all grown up many years ago ; they led their own lives, he was much alone. His wife, whom he had loved, had died young, and he missed her always.

We talked about journeys, for he too had the fever of the tramp-soul, that desire to travel ceaselessly over the world as if to embrace the earth.

How many feel this call of the desert, of the woods, of the rivers ? It is a stronger passion in those who feel it than the passion of love. It makes men leave their country and those they care for to seek for what they know not, in a land which—though perhaps unknown to them—is dearer to them than all. They have no home but the land which they never reach.

Those who are tramp-souls hear in the noises of the city the roar of a waterfall, see in the clouds above the monotonous roofs the snow-covered mountains ; hidden in fogs they dream of the sun's glare ; in a crowded world they are drunk

with the solitude of the desert. Like prisoners *A Hungarian* they struggle to escape to get to these things, but duty, poverty, or circumstances like iron chains are shackling their feet. The discomforts and hardships of a journey are dear to them, they are battling with nature forces, not with the petty traps men lay for each other ; heat, cold, thirst, starvation fight with their bodies, but they are not enemies to the soul—the spirit is free.

It is an endless seeking to find something which inevitably eludes ; yet in the very seeking is calm, at the sight of nearly remembered things from other lives there falls the hush of a secret half discovered. It seems to hover with the dawn on Fujiyama when the rose-tipped snow-peak catches a light we cannot see ; it is expressed in a mirage on a desert—then it is ours—we are nearing the knowledge withheld from us, and as we reach it the desert smiles but is empty of secrets.

To some Asia speaks as no human soul has ever spoken ; her deserts are filled with memories which rise from her past. Her rugged mountains, her inexorable plains are only harsh to those for whom they are new and strange, to those

A Hungarian who have been before, dust of her dust they are friends who smile at meeting again.

Of what forgotten flowers the blossoming thorn reminds them, what hunger of longing to join the wanderers clutches at their hearts when a troop of nomads pass ! And why does a laughing young girl, the last of those passing, look up and wave her hand as if expecting the traveller to stop and join them ? Perhaps she knows of the yearning to get away, to go with them ; perhaps she knows that the filmy scarf around the neck has become like a chain, a choking cobweb thing with the force of steel, meaning civilisation, habit, custom, which override the natural desire to return, which control it but cannot deaden it.

Yes, with the shuffling movement of the camel's tread what thoughts surge back ! How often we have watched tents unfolded to give shelter from pitiless heat, how often gazed upward from other desert nights at other stars, to wonder what hand is holding the lash that drives, to wonder why when driven in such different directions the end is for all the same ! Each has his secret temple, in which he hides in solitude to wait an answer to

what he does not know ; he only feels life is an *A Hungarian* eternal questioning, to which death is an answer he refuses to accept.

Perhaps the tramp-soul is the happiest ; each mountain he sees tells him of his phantasmal littleness, each plain he passes through makes him realise he is but as the sand is—a wind-blown thing unable to control his slightest action. He learns that the flesh is but the ghost of a spirit reality and that though it is not ours it is us, and that by ceaseless striving for its mastery we may at last have power to direct these visible forms, that they may indeed be truly spirit-filled.

My old friend and I talked of these things ; as we spoke he had tears in his eyes. He said to me : “ My child, I have no one in the world who is in my life and you are alone. I am old enough to be your grandfather ; will you let me adopt you as if you were in truth my grandchild, and we can go to see all these things that you care for ? ” As he spoke through the door came the little Frenchman, who said that the gale had gone down and the ship could start in a few hours. I stood by my old friend and put out my hand.

A Hungarian "Thank you, thank you, but I wish to be alone when I see Damáwand, I wish to be alone always."

He came with me to the ship. Just before it started I stood by the railings on the upper deck and saw him standing on the quay amidst a group of Kurds who had been bringing the mails to the ship. They were fine men, dressed in dust-coloured linen, classical in line and form ; round their waists were twisted green sashes, on their heads they wore tight-fitting linen hoods and on their foreheads a band of green, their feet were swathed in bands of the colour of their clothes. Thus might the Greeks have seen the men of Kurdistan.

My old friend in black stood leaning on an ivory-headed stick. He was aloof from all round him ; I do not think he noticed that some wild-looking Oriental prisoners were led past him and put in the prow of the ship, where ten Cossacks guarded them.

He was so detached from the background of floating craft and bales of merchandise that I almost saw him standing by a high-backed

hair in a large room hung with faded tapestry. *A Hungarian*
Laughingly I called out to him : "Look at the
Kurds, they are beautiful," but he could not
have heard what I said, because his answer was :
"I hope that you will see Damáwand free of
clouds."

PERSIA

PATRICK

ONCE a week I climb the Palatine Hill and *Patrick* sit on some steps by a small, half-hidden fountain to think of the bazaars of Tīhrán, the colour of Persia, and of a garden there which I remember.

When I think of these things as in a mirage in the memory of them loom the Kerry mountains, the Kerry mists and bogs over which wild duck float ; and all because the stranger who was a friend to me in Persia was an Irishman who spoke with an Irish brogue. This was Patrick.

After my arrival at the hotel at Tīhrán I found myself at my first meal there sitting at a long table, one of many people, but apparently the only stranger. This hotel was practically the home of a number of young men who because of their work are obliged to live in the place. Sometimes travellers passing through stop there for a few nights, and some of the people who come to Tīhrán for business also go there, but the real life of the hotel is the home life of these young men, and Mrs. Wright, to whom it belongs,

Patrick knows perhaps more about Ṭihrán than any other European woman, having come to Persia very many years ago with her husband, who was head gardener to Náṣīru'd-Dīn Shah. I felt as if I had been transplanted into a different world: the people all round me were talking in what was almost a strange language, they discussed their own affairs, and the interests of their day—they were all friends.

Suddenly I heard a strong deep voice saying something to me, something I was able to grasp at and give an answer to, and long after all the others had left us I was still listening to some one who could tell me about Persia, who understood the colour of the land, who spoke of Rúmí and Sa'dí, and who could besides say by heart many of the poems of Francis Thompson.

This was how Patrick and I made friends; he took me then to see many things that have since become part of my life.

It was together that we sat in the sunshine on the mounds which are the ruins of Ray, and there talked of the dead city below us, buried in dust and sand; we wondered how it had looked

when Tobias, guided by the angel, came to it from *Patrick* Nineveh. Near to it is a road leading to Sháh ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím, and many men passed on it riding on horses and mules ; we saw also some caravans of camels.

Between the road and where we sat ran a small stream bordered with translucent jade-green trees—fragile poplars still leafless. It was looking at them and at the mountains beyond that I realised how if one’s love of beauty is a real and living thing no human power can take it away ; it remains through all and precious beyond all things. I turned to Patrick and said : “ Fate has taken from me everything, everything that a human being can lose, and I can still say, ‘ Joy is mine,’ because I see the mountains around us are blue, the shadows in their valleys purple ; from the trees in the enclosed garden at our feet the wind blows towards us a shower of rose-pink blossoms ; the grass is a fresh spring green, the desert is gold-dust and endless as are our thoughts ; the little stream sings, sings all the time in the sun ; and when the night comes I love the stars, and the snow on the mountain-tops that in their light shines white

Patrick against the sky, and I think that I can say this because I am no longer myself, but by suffering have become part of all these things."

We used to walk back together, after dining with three other friends, through the deserted streets of Tīhrán, deserted of all but pariah dogs and the guard who continually asked us for the pass-word. At the end of a lane leading to the house of the Bakhtiari chief a tall Bakhtiari would challenge us. Life there was like a scene in a comic opera ; the pass-word was changed daily and after nightfall the large, blue-tiled gates of the city were closed—no one could enter or go out.

There was a feeling of recklessness, as if at any moment a revolution might fill the streets with stern, wild-looking men ; every moment seemed to be on the verge of some event, yet no one appeared to take anything that happened at all seriously. Perhaps it is owing to the height at which Tīhrán lies that the air affects every one in some way. Urgent telegrams are smilingly left unanswered, yet one flies into a state bordering on frenzy about a matter of no importance.

Many people find it difficult to sleep, and a

sense of being wound up and unable to stop con- *Patrick*
tinually drives them on, not caring or knowing to
what end. Many European women there suffer
from hysteria, and are plainly irresponsible for
their actions ; and since hysteria is as common in
men, they too find the climate trying to their
nerves.

However little politics interest one, in Tihrán
one delights in them. Events move quickly ; it
is not the dull, ponderous machinery called politics
in Europe ; it is irresponsible, light-hearted,
changeable—and how changing ! One moment
a man is little less than the ruler ; the next he is
an exile or dead.

Is this all because of the climate ? I think so.
Perhaps physiographists and physiologists could,
if they would, explain everything by that—even
Persian politics. Governments, if allowed to keep
in power too long, begin to take themselves
seriously, to the detriment of the people. How
wise the nations are who change them continually !
How wise the Persians are ! They have the
wisdom of adorable, quick-witted children. Do
they not show it in their refusal to let their

Patrick country be cut up by the railways of strangers, and their hills turned into the digging-places of miners ?

It is good to know, looking at their deserts and their mountains, that we now contend there with the same difficulties which beset travellers from all time. Let them keep these obstacles, so that only those who love their country will wish to go to her ; let her be kept like a virgin queen apart, in a world of barbarians. We should be thankful to them that we can still see Persepolis, Pasergardæ, Susa, lonely and desolate, as ruins of great dead cities ought to be.

There is indeed poetry in the mighty line of steel, and the snorting, dragon-like thing that flies over it, but what poetry is there in the hordes with which it is filled ! One could watch with pleasure the fiery monster speeding through a desert night, if one did not know that it was bringing many who can neither understand nor appreciate, and to whom the desert is a waste and dull place, which they will try to fill with their harsh laughter and with ugly contrivances for making money.

During our walks Patrick and I discussed these *Patrick* things, often disagreeing ; we also talked about the character of the Celt and the Slav—of course to the detraction of every other kind of nature. The Celt and the Slav were emotional, imaginative, generous and affectionate, passionate and impossible ; all the rest are merely impossible—at any rate to a Celt or a Slav. We did not, however, say this very seriously, but it amused us to find resemblances in those two peoples.

I went with him to see the bazárs, whence we always came laden with camel-beads, which being made of some porous stone do not take the colour with which they are dyed at the same depth all over ; in some places they appear almost pale green, in some grey, but the whole effect is vivid, gorgeous blue.

To enter the bazárs we used to walk down some steps ; the place is slightly below the level of the road, and is all under cover, lighted by round openings at the top of innumerable domes. Shafts of light from these fell on to the merchandise, on to the people passing, on to bowls of brass, on to green-mauve tiles, vivifying inanimate things

Patrick into a semblance of life, and veiling living faces with the mystery of the shadow from strong, concentrated light. Colour, colour was everywhere—in the deep brown of the ground, in the crimson, rose, and yellow of garments hung up for sale; and in its midst the black-shrouded women moved about noiselessly, like sad thoughts on a summer day.

Sometimes a darvish would pass, his head in the air, chanting in a low and raucous voice a verse from the Koran. I always wanted to follow and listen, but I wanted to see so much besides that there never was time enough.

All the different alleys belong to different trades; those of the makers of painted wooden trucks and of the saddlers were particularly gay. The shoemakers' shops had turquoise-blue leather slippers hung on the walls; the heels of these are iron-rimmed, and on the inside roses were painted on the leather and then varnished over.

As a rule, the men are in sober-coloured clothes, though I saw many who wore one brilliant coat over another equally gay; the

green sashes and turbans worn by the descendants *Patrick* of the Prophet are to be seen everywhere: there was much of a shade the colour of ripe pomegranates, and many shops were filled with that beautiful fruit.

Here and there we came to small squares in which fountains played; these were open to the sun and dazzling to one's eyes after the gloom of the covered ways. It seemed as if one could walk for hours and yet always find a fresh alley, see some marvellously new thing. We kept on stopping and standing still to try to draw into us some of all the colour glowing or half hidden around us. Surely the deeper tones crept out of the lighter shades, the dull mauve of backgrounds, the dark red of hanging carpets, the sober green of tiles; and at the end of an alley, restrained by reason of the quality of the merchandise to black and dull blue, was hung midway from the ceiling a long linen scarf, the colour of an Eastern night. It was as the note struck on a tuning-fork, from which springs a melody; the whole scheme of colour grew out of that tone.

Patrick Many donkeys were laden with oranges, some with sacks of dried fruit and nuts ; these were little moving shops and people bought from their owners as they passed. Camels went by, scattering the people on either side : the camel is a proud animal, unconcerned with petty things ; if one loves him at all one loves him above all beasts, but he is not pleasant in a narrow street, and he not only makes you feel extremely small by merely looking at you, but he also can, and does, bite.

Sometimes a man on a horse would canter through, apparently undisturbed by the fate of any who may have been in his way.

The shopkeepers seemed to be more occupied with drinking glasses of tea and smoking the qalyán than with selling their goods. They did not at all bother one to buy, and Patrick said this was because there are so few Europeans in Tīhrán ; very few ever came to the bazárs, and it was not the custom there to worry the passer-by.

Now and then through open spaces we saw the minarets of mosques and behind them the

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snow-clad mountains, but this, as a rule, meant *Patrick* that we were nearing some way out of the bazárs, and I begged Patrick to come back again, to see more, more : to see again little laughing children, looking so absurdly like their elders, playing in the ways of sunlight ; to see again the enormous, turquoise-coloured bowls filled with white curd-like stuff, which people bought and drank out of smaller turquoise bowls ; to see again the crowd that passed and repassed, to be with them, near them, near all the movement that bewildered the senses and in all the colour which delighted the eyes.

At last, leaving it, we stopped at the top of some steps and looked back at the alley we had left. At regular intervals, like yellow veils, fell the shafts of dust-filled light ; round them everything from where we were standing appeared lost in monotonous sombreness, but near us and out of the semi-gloom glowed a sea of eyes, the deep brown speaking eyes of those who were also leaving and looking up the steps towards the light.

At our feet a man dropped on the ground

Patrick from his shoulder an inflated animal skin, into which he was ladling water from a hole opening into a wide drain through which a stream flowed. A beggar asked alms. Patrick gave him something ; we left.

Patrick has a truly Irish sense of humour ; he could tear himself to pieces. Often, when depressed, he would say that everything he felt or thought was merely a matter of mood, that he was not really any one thing, that no Irishmen could be, that by their temperament they were unstable, uncertain ; but if one of us dared to say a word agreeing with his criticism of the Irish character we were given a brilliant homily on the subject of the superiority of the inhabitants of that lovely green island, which often lasted well over an hour—full of epigram and wit—so often we disagreed with him and were left wondering whether he was making fun of himself or of us.

Patrick took me to see Qasr-i-Qájár. To the people living in Tíhrán it is a deserted palace, a place to picnic in, somewhere to go when there is nothing else to do ; for me it was my first Persian

garden. Perhaps the castle is dilapidated, but it *Patrick* has many blue tiles ; perhaps the garden could be better kept, but in it there is a square lake in which were reflected leafless trees, and beyond it is an avenue of poplars and some almond-trees blossoming. I daresay later in the year iris grow from the grass, and perhaps lilies float on the water of the pond—it seems as if these things and a tangle of cyclamen, jasmine, and peonies grow in my memories of this place.

We sat on some steps and looked without speaking at the plain : a storm was creeping up from where in the distance we had looked on to the golden dome of the mosque of Sháh ‘Abdu’l-‘Azím. We sat in the sunshine ; far-away Tīhrán was lost in the grey rain, then the pale yellow sand seemed to rise up from the earth to meet the rain which passionately beat down upon it—the storm was nearing us, crossing the desert. One or two large drops fell by us—on us ; the distant mountains were almost lost to sight, for a short time they looked through the blade-like rain like banks of angry clouds.

Patrick Patrick was reading aloud in a deep, clear voice :

“ Is my gloom after all,
Shade of His hand outstretched caressingly,”
when some drops fell on to the book—it was
raining : we were on the edge of a storm.

MATROS

MATROS is a large white Pomeranian dog *Matros* who lives at Rasht ; he belongs to the Russian wife of a Levantine who keeps a hotel there.

When I arrived at the hotel after the three days' journey by road from Tīhrán it was almost night, and in the gloom of the small garden in front of the hotel I saw Matros running backwards and forwards and barking to tell his mistress of our arrival. When the gate was opened he jumped into the carriage, and much more clearly than any human being could have said it he said : "So here you are again ; I am glad to see you back !" We had made friends on my way through.

The Russian woman then came forward and we walked up the stairs to a room on the first floor, Matros running in front of us. The woman and I could not understand each other : she only spoke Russian and Persian, and her husband, though he knew Turkish and Persian, only spoke a little French. Matros seemed to understand

Matros any language, and he spoke them all. He jumped on to the sofa, on to the chairs, on to my boxes, on to the bed ; he couldn't keep still, he was so pleased, and I was so glad that some one was pleased to see me that I sat down by him on the floor, put my head on his coat and cried.

The room into which I was taken had many windows ; they had only white curtains in front of them—one could not make it dark at night. There was an iron bed and a small sofa and an iron washing-stand with a tin basin. The floor was wood, and a rough red rug was placed on it near the bed. It was not too uncomfortable, but very cold, as for some days there had been a storm, and even now the wind blew under the doors and through crevices in the woodwork of the windows. I could also hear the steadily falling rain outside, and somewhere where it leaked on to the verandah near my room the water dropped slowly with dull thuds on to the wooden floor.

Matros lay on the bed, and I sat on my box and told him of my journey. His eyes did not blink, but now and then he wagged his tail and

once he jumped down from the bed and came *Matros* near me and then jumped back again. All the time that I was there he behaved in an extraordinary manner—I think that he had the soul of some dead friend.

I told him that I had left Tīhrán early in the morning in the sunshine, and that Damáwand had stood clear in the sky—Damáwand that, like Soracte, is a mysteriously living thing to the poets of its land. When the carriage, with its four miserable horses harnessed abreast, turned at last a bend of the road, and the distant mountain was hidden behind some little hills, I felt as if I could not any longer bear to be in a world where distance so pitilessly separates, where we are not given limbs as swift as our thoughts, and where we can only see the heights that are difficult and impossible to reach.

I sat by the driver and took the reins out of his hands and drove the horses myself. The road was flat and the horses jogged along at the same steady pace all the time. Each one was covered with bells which rang in varying tones ; the sound they made was sad, but the falling night was sadder still.

Matros In the distance on one side was desert, on the other a wall of mountains growing into one deep shade of purple. The driver was young, he might have been some Persian fairy prince : his eyes were dark and large, his face oval, and his skin like the leaf of a magnolia flower. His hair was dyed with henna and cut in the usual Persian fashion, in the way in which Italians wore their hair in the fourteenth century ; his hat was the brown round Persian felt made in the shape of a globe, his clothes were the colour and texture of brown holland and very much in tatters.

We tried to talk, but as we met in no common language we could only smile. He pointed to the hills, his arms wide open towards them, his head thrown back ; I knew he meant that they were his hills and he thought them beautiful, and I smiled and nodded. Every now and then he said poems in a dreamy sing-song voice, he kept on jumping down to pick me flowering thorns, and often he pointed out to me some little animal creeping in the road or a bird flying overhead. When we came close to some vultures who were flapping about near to the carcase of a

dead horse, I stopped the horses, I had never seen *Matros* vultures before. He looked anxiously into my face to see what I thought of them : I said to him in English, "They look to me more like evil human beings than animals." He apparently wished to distract me from them, and climbed down and brought back in his hand a little dead bird, and showed me the wonderful colours of its feathers.

We drove on. It was then almost dark, dark because there were angry clouds in the sky ; the wind blew a gale. We had come to a post-house where horses are changed and where this driver left us. As they were unharnessing the horses I stood by a steep cliff above a wide river : everything looked dull and grey, the sky, the water, the hills, and the desert. The road on which we were to continue the journey led into a gully and up a mountain. Down this gully the wind shrieked and blew a dust-storm which seemed impenetrable ; the frogs croaked all the time : their song, like the wind's song, is the same in all countries, their music was born in the land of despair, and they sing their song to those who have traversed that land.

Matros The young driver let loose three of the horses, and they started off alone to return to the last post-house ; he followed them riding on the fourth, and was soon lost to sight in gloom and swirling dust. We went on and then the storm burst. Rain and lightning and thunder and the four horses climbing in the midst of these things upwards, on a steadily rising road. One moment all was dark, and in another, in a light more fearful than darkness, we saw the road stretching out in front of us, then darkness again, and the sound of hail beating on the window-panes of the carriage.

At last, late at night, we came to a post-house where I thought I could sleep and wait till the storm was over, but all the rooms were filled with men ; I went to look into each one, and in each there were people sleeping even on the floor. Some one spoke a little French and said I had better sleep on the table, but I could not bear the nearness of so many human things, I wanted to be lost in the night, which was wild and desolately dark, so I persuaded the new driver to put in his horses and to start.

For four hours we drove through utter darkness *Matros* and through a downpour, and then came to another post-house, where I decided to stop for a few hours. No one answered when we called, so I climbed up on a dark staircase and went into a room where two men were sleeping and made one of them understand that I must have a bed. He showed me all the rooms, they were all full, but he put a carpet down in a passage and brought in a brass brazier filled with burning charcoal. The brazier was delightful in shape and the carpet hand-made and of good colour. I lay down on it by the brazier, and, covered by a fur coat, slept till I woke to find a Cossack kneeling on the ground looking at me.

This post-house is one of the nicest on the road ; it is just above a wide river valley and not far from forests. On my way to Tīhrán I had noticed how small the river itself was in its enormous bed, but by the light of the rainy dawn I saw that the waters reached from one side of the valley to the other, and that the flood was carrying with it trunks of trees and the carcasses of animals. Some one came up to me and told me in German that an overhanging rock had fallen on to the road on which I

Matros had driven a few hours before, and that it would be impassable for many days. Then we started on the road to Rasht.

I told *Matros* all this and how dull it was driving all day in the rain without even a little dog to talk to ; how I longed to get out and walk down to the flooded river—we drove near it for some hours ; how much I felt that every mile I left behind meant that I was going away from the land where passing caravans make music on the road !

The last caravan of camels that I saw just before entering Rasht was going in the direction of *Tīhrán*. There were many splendid animals, perhaps two hundred of them, tied tail to tail, each one decorated with beads, bells, and gaily coloured carpets. When the last camel passed I stopped my horses, got out of the carriage, and stood in the drenching rain watching them struggling with the wind, the mud, and rain. Their bells rang all the time just in the same way in which they had rung on the clear starlit nights when caravans had passed me in the moonlight on the mountains, and mysterious purple shapes had stood between me and the night sky ; they were no sadder now, their sound

speaks always of dead things hidden away from sight. *Matros*
As I was watching one fell down; some of the men
went to it to try to help it up, but it did not move
—I think that it was dead.

I had finished telling all this to *Matros*. I went
into a room behind the bar—*Matros* sat on a chair
by me. The room was small and narrow, and in
it was a long table at the other end of which sat a
Russian merchant who complained of the impos-
sibility of doing any trade with Persia. We spoke
in German, and he told me many interesting things
about the country we were in. I loved it, he hated
it, so we argued for a long time. He had tele-
graphed to Anzali, and had heard that owing to the
storm the steamer from Baku had not been able to
land, and so had gone back to Baku. This meant
that we who were waiting to leave by it would have
to go either by a cargo boat—if one was starting—
or wait for next week's steamer. After more tele-
graphing we found that no boat of any kind was
leaving for two days, so I made up my mind to be
patient and to see something of Rasht.

When I went to bed *Matros* insisted on staying
outside my door all night. Twice they took him

Matros away, twice he escaped and came back, and I felt glad that he was there.

In the morning the sun was shining, and he and I went for a walk in the bazárs. The mud was dreadful, but I liked seeing all that there was to see, and stopped to watch many of the shops in which people were making the things which they sold. There were many little fountains with brilliant-coloured tiles, and sometimes the gates of mosques or caravanserais had fine tiles on them. We walked out into the country to the rice-fields and saw ponds filled with what I thought were dark stones, but when I saw them moving I was delighted to find they were live tortoises. I had never seen them "wild" before. We sat a long time watching them. It was the first warm spring day, and there was nothing in the sky or on the trees to show what a storm we had lived through, only in the river and on its banks we saw the devastating power of rain.

Once a party of men came by riding on donkeys, all seated with their legs crossed on the saddle. They were muffled in different coloured and voluminous cloaks and looked more like gay

sacks than people. Peasants were working in the *Matros* fields, and in one place a group of women in bright clothes were washing linen in a little stream. Near them was an orchard filled with fruit trees blossoming. Many flocks of black duck flew above our heads, we saw snipe and teal, and sometimes a solitary heron or bittern with large wings floated through the air. The air and the ground seemed filled with living things ; there were no sounds but bird sounds, not even the ringing of the caravan bells, for we were not on the road leading either to Tīhrán or to the coast. We sat for a long time in the sun, side by side on a large stone, watching blackbirds and thrushes hopping about on the branches, and saw one or two blue jays and many magpies.

Matros kept quite still ; I held one of his paws. The animals did not notice us, and lizards crept quite close to us into the sunshine, and frogs jumped from stone to stone in the little stream by the roadside ; the tortoises, in search of food, moved so much more quickly than I had thought was possible for them.

The moss by the banks of the stream was

Matros covered with large violets and many other wild flowers whose names I did not know. Perhaps never in any country, in any spring, had I been so conscious of the awakening of life after the sleep of winter, and never had the new green of the leaves seemed so translucent, so delicate, so frail. Behind us and not far away were the large mountains, bare of trees and covered with snow.

The next day I left for Anzali. *Matros* knew I was leaving : he saw that my boxes were tied with cords on to the back of the carriage. He jumped in and they took him away, he ran back and they carried him away again. The Russian woman cared for him very much or I think she would have given him to me. He seemed to wish to come with me ; he had been kind to me and it hurt me to leave him.

ITALY



RESI

RESI is my third Rome—quite modern Rome. *Resi*
When we go to the Palatine together we neither await the spring nor do we talk of the Cæsars, but we walk on the roof of Caligula's house in the scent of the orange-blossoms or look down at the wistaria or the red roses which carpet the Forum, and chatter about clothes or wonder what play may interest us to see ; then hasten away to get a yard of ribbon or to buy a cake to take home for tea.

People say Resi is a child of nature—why is not nature more prolific of such children ? She is an artist, but before that she is a woman, and more woman than artist and more child than woman ; almost any building is too small for her, one feels she must be out under the sky—to know her really one has to be with her in the country and see her running about with her Russian wolfhound.

She is tall, with the splendid figure that perhaps one only finds in Italy ; she has something of the Victory of Samothrace in the fearless movements

Resi of her healthy, perfect limbs. Her olive skin is colourless, her eyes are hazel, her hair is black—in the sun it shines like the glossy wings of a bird ; but it is the way in which she arranges her hair that makes her look different from any other girl, and it is indeed utterly charming. When it comes down—which thing happens frequently, she pins it only with two large tortoiseshell pins—one has many opportunities for seeing how it is done. She parts it in the middle, then there are two long plaits, one she turns round her head one way, the other the opposite way, sticks a pin on each side of her head and leaves the ends of bunchy curls to fall where they will, generally on either side of her face. All that other women think about themselves and hide she says with the candid simplicity of a child.

One day I found her in her studio, radiant in a scarlet overall, in a muddle of brushes, paints, canvases, fashion books and teacups. She pushed me into the only armchair and said: "You must sit there and stop there till you have told me what I am to wear for the dance on Tuesday."

I racked my brains to try to think of a mixture *Resi* of colours and materials. *Resi* made some tea and handed me a cup ; she upset the easel and her chair in doing this.

She sat down by the small gas-stove and, with her face in her hands, looked at me.

“ You must think of something lovely, so that when I come into the room they will all stand still and say : ‘ How splendid ! ’ ”

I said : “ But if you wear your old grey dress they will say so just the same.”

She jumped up angrily. “ No they won’t, no they won’t, and I will not go unless they are going to look at me.”

We both laughed, then we became serious : there was no sugar for the tea, she had eaten it all. She rushed to the door and shouted till a little boy came panting up the stairs. She handed him some money and he ran to buy sugar with it. She is always impulsive, and sometimes rushes back saying I must go with her immediately to a play, and then we go to the little theatre where they give different pieces of one hour each, and where one can keep one’s seats and pay for a

Resi second performance if one wishes to stop. We go, too, to the other theatres to which well-known actors and actresses come for a few weeks at a time. We are always amused by a Roman audience : if there is the slightest noise the whole theatre rises to protest, making a disturbance lasting some minutes. The Romans have altered in not seeming to take pleasure any longer in the dangers run by others for their amusement. If anything is done approaching riskiness to the performer, all immediately cry, "Basta, basta !" till the people are forced to stop or hurry over their dangerous tricks.

Once at the circus a man in a lion's cage appeared for a moment to be in a difficult position : "basta !" shouted the crowd. I looked at *Resi* wondering if she would put her thumb downwards from our box, but no, she was shouting "basta" with the rest.

Rome is like a large village—one soon knows the faces of those who live here ; but one hardly notices the tourists, they lead such entirely different lives from those of us who live and work here.

They go to the concerts on Sunday afternoons *Resi* in the building which once was the tomb of Augustus ; *Resi* and I go to the rehearsals of the same concerts and hear the music in semi-darkness amongst a small number of Roman musicians, artists, and students. We walk back afterwards by the Corso ; some of those who have also been there join us and we all climb the steps leading to the Piazza dei Monti, and then many more again, ending in a view which no one who has seen it can ever forget. *Angelelli* goes to the piano, he plays *Bach* ; the rest stand by the open windows looking at the wide sky above or at Rome so far below, and the moon shines into the room. In a corner on a small table stands a statue of *Buddha* ; a dull gold halo is behind him, his hand is raised, he smiles as if he too heard the music. Then some clouds cover the moon, the light in front of the statue burns steadily and the room is more visible than Rome ; some flowers in a vase make shadows on the ceiling. *Resi* becomes impatient, at last she turns up the lights, we shut the windows and all sit down. The one who had played rolls a

Resi cigarette, he begins an argument on music ; we all discuss, we all disagree, we all talk at the same time.

In the morning we walk down the Via Frattina to buy the daily paper, and meet the little newspaper boy from whom we like to get it. He laughs and looks up admiringly at the beautiful signorina, gives her the paper and runs away to some one else who is beckoning to him. He is called Mario and he stands half the night outside Aragno's Café and knows all the artists, journalists, and every one else in Rome. People, instead of going in to see if any one they want to speak to is in the café, ask Mario, and he can tell them if the person they seek has arrived or gone away.

Often we go to Porta Nomentana to walk in the country there and sit on the walls of the old bridge to look at the distant snow. *Resi* says that the place is too sad ; she shakes me and says : " I will not have you silent—you are far away, come back here and talk. Why do you look at Monte Cavo always and what do you think of when you look at it ? " I told her : " I think of Byron." She said : " Wasn't he an English poet ? "

I answered that he was a man who had understood *Resi* Rome as perhaps few have ever understood her. I tried to translate for her :

“ O Rome, my country—City of the soul,”

but failed dismally. She grew impatient and said : “ Yes, I know about him ; he was a bad man for he loved many women.”

“ Did he ?—I don’t know : is love a bad thing ? I only know that he rode often in the Campagna, and that I partly feel what he felt when he looked at Monte Cavo.”

“ Well,” she said, “ anyhow, the English wouldn’t have him in their country.” I vaguely murmured that Shelley had been exiled too, and his soul was as clear stream water.

We walked on and stopped. She leant against a wooden paling which divided the road from a field ; behind her was a clump of fir-trees, beyond them the Campagna ending in the sky-line of the valley between the Alban and the Sabine hills.

I wanted to say some bitter thing about the world which had misjudged those two men, but

Resi smiled at her instead. Does the world of hypocrisy matter in any way when the setting sun makes purple the Apennines ?

We have often sat on the stone seats in Piazza Navona to look at Bernini's fountain of the four great rivers, when *Resi* has talked and I have listened to the way in which the sound of her words mingled with the deep notes of the falling water. Some one said that this fountain was not their idea of what four great rivers are ; we laughed and asked if they expected them to be represented by four canals rushing through the piazza. We are quite content with Bernini, listening to the trickling Roman water singing of the Ganges.

The mystery of the Middle Ages seems suddenly to arrest us in the midst of a street of trams and motor-cars when we meet funerals led by grey-hooded men ; we stand still whilst the slowly moving hearse, so modern in its garish triviality, passes by us, and we contrast with it the dignity of the shrouded forms and the simple lines of their grey garments girdled with hempen rope.

There is always some new thing to see in any

walk through the streets of Rome, there is always *Resi* the delight of surprise at the colours of bands of students who move about making patches of black, red, or purple. In the summer, when they have gone, Rome is like an enormous cage bereft of its gayest birds, and we miss them though the swallows swirl continually round the piazza near our windows, the nightingales sing through the whole night in the Borghese gardens, and jack-daws hunt for pieces of bread on the balcony and fly with them to a roof near and below, where we can see them quarrelling for the best bits.

We never pass a flower stall without stopping to look at the apple-blossoms, the iris, and the vivid purple violets, all of which only fade to burst into bunches of summer roses and scarlet peonies, and often we walk to the end of the Via Condotti to look back at the altar-like Trinità dei Monti with the blaze of flowers at the foot of its steps. Many go to see it, it is one of the sights of the world, but for us it is our daily life to be with these things.

When we are outside the town, on the hill of the Parioli, we often see some bent old cardinal,

Resi with drawn and pensive face, walking quickly followed by a footman and, further away still, by his carriage ; and from there we go to the spring of Acqua Acetosa and look at the people in the well-house built by Bernini as they fill the bottles with water, which they afterwards carry round to sell in the streets ; and then walk back to Ponte Molle to look at the chapel of Sant' Andrea a Ponte Molle, from where we come back by the tramway on the Via Flaminia and talk of the people who had entered Rome by the gate which we are nearing. How many have told us of their impressions of this city when first they looked through the arches of the Porta del Popolo, and we think of those, too, who marched on this road centuries before those arches were built.

There *Resi* says she must leave me, she has some appointment to keep. I enter the church of Santa Maria del Popolo with a sigh of gratitude to think that I need not breathlessly hurry through it, but can go in there quietly whenever I am near.

In any other city a museum or a church is a cold building into which we go to see and admire

things of beauty, feeling acutely the distance *Resi* between ourselves and the thing we see, but in Rome all that which belongs to her is in a curious way part of our own life ; even the Vatican and the Palatine might be in our own house, so near they are to us, so much do they belong to us.

One day a friend lent us a car ; we went to spend the day at Subiaco, arranging to be home in time for dinner. We had hardly left Rome when a tyre burst, and whilst the driver mended it we sat on a low stone wall, both hatless in the early morning sunshine. When the tyre was mended we went on to Tivoli and lunched near the top of a narrow and incredibly high waterfall and watched the trees through the spray from the larger and more noisy waterfalls further away. Afterwards we went to Subiaco, to the convent there, in which the nuns had been for some months such kind friends to me.

It was the Feast of St. Agnes, and when we arrived they were all in their church with some Daughters of Mary who were spending the day with them. The small church was quite filled ; we had to kneel down outside in the large, stone-

Resi paved corridor. One of the nuns saw us and came out to tell us that the service was nearly over and that we must wait to see the others.

We had tea there, in a whitewashed room which had one window in the thick wall and looked on to the grass square in front of the convent where the village children play.

I showed *Resi* the room in which I had lived and the frescoes in it. In one, in a magnificent scene of comparatively modern Rome with the tomb of Cestius added for ancient effect, was a group of dames in seventeenth-century clothes standing in front of a small pond, on which floated a fair and flourishing Moses guarded by a Roman soldier in armour. On the ceiling were nice arabesques—floating figures of nymphs—but these had been mutilated by some monks who had lived in the convent before it had been given to the nuns, and who had found the figures more pleasing than innocent.

The room had two windows, one above a fountain where water dropped steadily day and night, singing the dolour of a rainy day in the midst of all the summer sunshine. The other

window was shaded by a cherry-tree ; I had waked *Resi* often to see its red fruit shining like rubies, my first view of many a new day was through their gleaming crimson.

Above the convent stands the Rocca. We climbed up to see the stern-looking castle where Alexander VI. had lived as cardinal. It is now empty of life but filled with haunting silences, for the Borgia leave something sinister in any building they have inhabited.

In some of the rooms there are seventeenth-century frescoes of Subiaco at that time. How prosperous it looked, how graceful and elegant the men and women walking in silks and satins in the strangely spacious streets, how different from them, yet also how delightful, the peasants in their especial clothes ! The buildings have not altered since those days, there are also only a very few more, but the people look much less prosperous and the streets have somehow become quite small and narrow. Often I had wandered through these rooms half afraid, there were so many staircases, so many entrances through seemingly solid walls. I felt as if some forgotten

Resi prisoner would push aside the walls behind me and look with haggard eyes once more on life.

I showed *Resi* the patch of green grass between the high walls of the castle ; it was a little secret garden reached from a room by some stone steps, and from the larger garden by a dark passage with two doors. I had often sat there, and had tried to read or work, but spent my hours instead in looking at the monastery of the Capuchins in the distance, half hidden by the cypress-trees of their garden, or at the mountains that are so like the mountains of Persia in the glory of their uncovered nakedness—clear colour, unspoilt by forest trees.

Our day was like the movements of people in a cinematograph—everything happened quickly, jerkily. She wished to see all, so we rushed from one place to another, up the narrow staircase-streets where donkeys were carrying fuel, sacks, furniture on their backs, and where people sat in groups outside their houses talking and working—many of them spinning. I showed her old palaces, now lived in by peasants, but whose walls and windows no dirt or ill-treatment could spoil. She said it was like a rabbit-warren, she could not understand

how I could find my way about in it ; but I had *Resi* spent many hours of many days hunting old houses in its streets, and when one walks alone one sees.

From the darkness of a street so narrow that its houses nearly met above us, we suddenly looked on to a patch of sunlight in which stood a monk in the brown habit of the Franciscans, and by him, talking to him, were a man and a woman—the woman in a bright blue linen dress with a yellow handkerchief on her shoulders, the man in black. They stood outside a grey stone house, on the walls of which were painted frescoes, so old that we could only just see the depths of the colour of the Madonna's blue robe ; her face and hands, and the body of her naked child, were dark with age. Under this, on a little shelf, was a vase filled with a tight bunch of many-coloured flowers, and by it were some oil-lamps like those in ancient tombs.

Resi said : " It is lovely ; have you got your Kodak ? " I had it behind me, and said : " Yes, but I would rather remember it. "

We walked past the damp cave-rooms in which girls were weaving, and stopped often to talk to

Resi those I had known, and to listen to the clack, clack of the movement of the wooden shuttles.

We went to the place where Regina works—Regina, who has a voice like a bird, and who is pretty past all belief. She was shy, and would not sing ; we had no time to try to persuade her, and walked on till, in a bend of the road, we met Dorothea, who washes the clothes at the convent. She dropped the mass of wet linen which she was carrying on her head and ran towards me ; I think we hugged each other, we were so glad to meet again.

She has thick grey hair, which waves in loose natural curls ; her eyes are large and dark, but sad from too much weeping—her life is not a happy one ; her face once was beautiful, it now looks worn from fear.

She wore a full dark mauve skirt and a white linen shirt, over which she had tied a green handkerchief. She had in her ears the large gold earrings so loved by the women of Subiaco, and round her neck a rope of corals. I have never seen her dress in any other way, and she is always good to look at.

She said : " I have prayed always, always ; are *Resi* you happier now—are you happy ? "

I held her hand. " Dorothea, you must pray more still, more than ever now." Then we said good-bye.

Then *Resi* and I climbed the hill to Santa Scolastica, where we found a crowd of little boys waiting outside the monastery. They had been working in the olive fields which belong to the monks, and were pleased that their work was over. They ran and tumbled about on the grass of the garden, whose low walls skirt the gorge which once enclosed Nero's lakes. We asked to see one of the monks, and, as we waited, some one came out carrying a large basket filled with cakes. The little boys, delighted and chattering, filed past him, and each one had a cake given to him. There was one over. *Resi* asked for it.

We went into the cloisters, and in the second one I pointed out to her the bust of a woman in a niche on the wall, under which was written in strange Latin : " Sum statua statua exemplo sum. vana superbis."

Resi As the sun was setting we clambered down the rocky path and looked back to where above us was the Cave of St. Benedict. It was sad not to have time to go up to that holy place where, looking at the marvellous frescoes of the rock churches, I had spent so many summer hours. It was the first time I had been to Santa Scolastica without climbing the ilex wood leading to the upper sanctuary ; the first time I had left that road without a leaf of a rose-tree from St. Benedict's garden in my hand, without one look at the picture of the saint who called the birds his brothers. I never see the swallows swirling without thinking that they are making a living halo for the head of St. Francis of Assisi.

The mists from the Anio had begun to rise, they filled the valley ; our last view of Subiaco was of a city on a solitary rock floating in a valley of vapour, its houses were lighted with indefinite lights.

I knelt on the seat of the car to see the last of it, we were rapidly losing it in the quickly rising mist and in night. How remote it looked above the cloudy veil, like a holy city floating heaven-

ward ! I felt as if I were leaving it, knowing that *Resi* the paths from it no longer touched the earth on which I stood, that no roads lead back to it ; it had become a dream-city in which I had buried dreams, and the key of whose gates I had lost. The bend of the road hid it ; then once again further on we saw the light which burns on the castle walls before the Madonna.

I sat down by *Resi*, we lay with our heads leaning on the back of the car. I looked at the star-filled sky to find again in its silences the Subiaco days in which I had lived my first Italian summer, when the mist had crept up at night into the convent garden and the moon shone on it so that one could not see the flowers. I had looked down from my window into a greyness in which floated myriads of tiny lights—I could not think that in all the world so many fireflies were alive—it was as if the Milky Way had been entangled in the bushes of the garden, as if below as well as above me was a sky filled with stars that sang because it was a summer night. By the light of the moon, as we were mending yet another puncture, we could see perched on the

Resi hill-top Saracinesco, the village in the Ciociaria from where all the pretty models come.

Later on we went through Tivoli again, and then ran quickly through the olive woods on to the flat once more. The light of the car flashing on the gnarled trunks of the olive-trees made them appear to be alive, as if pale dead old men reached out shrunken arms to grasp the monster flying through their darkness. They were dragged from their obscurity to glare a moment's hatred at the living, to terrify by their tortured glances those who ran laughing through their woods.

Resi kept on hoping for yet another puncture, she wanted to be very late in getting home ; it must have been to please her that the acetylene lamp went out—it needed water. I sat on a wall and she insisted on going herself to find a stream ; I heard her laughingly calling out to me from the semi-darkness. She ran back at last with water in her cap and we went on. The car hummed—“Rome, home, home, Rome” all the time ; we saw the lights of the city now quite close to us. I said to Resi : “Is it not wonderful to feel that

when we return at night to Rome it is to our *Resi* home, to our daily life in a place in which all the world must want to live." I sometimes think that the happiest moments of the days in the Campagna are when I face Rome, knowing it is there that I live.

For her the day was a complete success. We had forgotten the key of the front door and had to wait nearly an hour before any one heard us to let us in. She secretly hoped that no one would wake and we could motor about all night long : she was planning a run to Ostia when the large doors slowly opened and we saw the infinite gloom of indoors.

Resi had always wished to go with me to hear the singing of the monks on the Aventine. I had not taken her, thinking she would not care for their music. One day she complained bitterly : "You think I am a creature of the sun and have no soul ; I too have death in my heart and I wish to hear the singing that means so much to you." So I took her there.

She was very good and patient for some time ; I watched her small white face paler than usual

Resi from the reflection of her green velvet hat. She turned her dark eyes towards me and looked unhappy, her mouth was drawn down as if she were about to cry. At last she leant towards me and said: "I cannot bear to think of all they have given up to sing so sadly ; let us go out into the sun." We opened the door and, as she passed out, for one moment I looked back. The monks, all in black, were kneeling in long rows, behind them were grey granite pillars ; the lights on the altar shone faintly through a cloud of incense on which the sun was shining from a window at the side, then the door closed. I felt they were shutting us out. "*Resi*," I whispered, "we made a mistake, this is not the place for you, for you have not quite forgotten your marble-pillared temple on this hill."

She lifted up her arms, and it was the movement of one drawing a bow ; her wolfhound who had waited for us sprang towards her, and together they ran quickly through a gate leading into a field. There they stood silhouetted against the pale violet shadows on the sky, which are the Alban hills.

PASQUAROSA

PASQUAROSA, who is only twelve years old, *Pasquarosa* has all the instincts of a hostess and will, no doubt, by her fine voice, through the *café chantant* or the stage, reach that height of bliss in which she can expend precious time and vitality in trying to amuse those who prefer to be bored.

She likes giving parties on the empty space in front of a studio to which I sometimes go. I have often watched her ordering about a number of children and directing their games. One day she had gathered together a small army of boys and girls and was teaching them how to dance—a little girl was the band. She had evidently been chosen because of the strength of her lungs, as she began to shout a valse and continued to shout it for a very long time; there were no variations from the simple melody. The boys were shy but, wishing to please, they let themselves be ordered about by Pasquarosa, who was in one of her most managing moods.

She put the boys in one line and the girls in another, and then turned towards the band and

Pasquarosa said : " Stop the music till they are quite ready."

The music did not wish to stop and continued to hum the same valse, but more slowly and softly. *Pasquarosa* then turned to the first boy, saying : " Scegli una dama." He looked vague, not seeming to understand such grand language. She caught hold of him impatiently and shouted : " Prendi pe' la mano 'na ragazzina," which he hastily did.

The band started quite loudly once more and for a few moments all went well. Then one of the boys found that the music got on his nerves ; he rushed up and hit the band on the head and a free fight began, the boys against the girls. There was a great deal of screaming and some tears, then parents arrived and the party was broken up.

As I was going through the studio door I saw that *Pasquarosa* stood there alone. She held between her white teeth a piece of chocolate that I had given her—with her hands she was tying the ribbon on her hair ; she was smiling and I felt certain was planning another party for another day.

THE ROOF-GARDEN

Ut liceat Romae oblivisci quaerendus mihi est aliquis fluvius

Lethaeus

Erasmus

FOR most of us there are places whose concrete forms are so filled with soul that we visualise them into shapes of heroic Man or Woman. To me Asia and Rome are not merely places but living beings—Rome like a great mother whose hands soothe my every day. *The Roof-garden*

Yet another place, though perhaps not an actually living thing to me as Rome and Asia are, still in some strange inexplicable way a friend, is my roof-garden; and I cannot, in writing of strangers who have become my friends, leave out this place which is dearer to me than all that is new in my life.

I have wondered where and how to write of it, and have now come up to it, and amongst the bushes and flowering shrubs under a star-filled sky write of the place which is so near to the clouds, so high above Rome.

It is night. I sit under a pergola in the light of a candle put into an old Chinese lantern, above

*The Roof-
garden*

me are grape leaves and tiny green spots which later on will become bunches of yellow grapes. The stars look as though they hung on the woodwork of the pergola; they shine through the leaves as if already the dull green grape had been filled with the passionate spirit of wine.

From a garden near I hear the croaking of frogs, the nightingales, too, sing; just below is the house in which died one who had sung of the nightingale. I know that it was not here that he wrote those exquisite words, but here too he must have felt the nightingale's song.

The bells strike the hour—all in different tones—some deep and slow, some silver-clear. All the sound seems to fall from the sky: I instinctively look upward when the bells begin to ring. There is one church clock far away which is always later than the rest, and rings quickly, as if realising it was behind the others it tried to catch them up. There is no music like the sound of all these things. I move away from the pergola and stand on the part of the roof looking towards St. Peter's. Rome is dark below me, the houses are high, the roads are narrow; there

are only dull red ribbons of light showing where the streets are. To-night the new monument is lighted by flashlight ; it stands vivid white as though carved on night in snow. *The Rooj-garden*

The moon creeps slowly up from behind Monte Cavo—how clearly one sees from here the square buildings on the top of the hill ! It is now high in the sky, and Rome's surrounding hills are almost green again in the strong light. The Aventine and Palatine, those desolate small hills, are dark against the sky ; between them and the Janiculum lies the flat Campagna, ending in the sea ; I think that somewhere I see a silver line, I think I see a light on the sea. The wind comes from there, the wind all Romans love blows cool on to my face.

On the Janiculum here and there are glimmering lights on the roads ; further on again is the long line of trees high up behind St. Peter's—the pines with straight tall stems ; often at night they stand like black sentinels against the blood-red sky of lightning. Just below them is the Dome, the monument that marks the centre of the world, Rome midway between the East and the West,

Rome who dazzled the eyes of the East and changed the West from savage into civilised nations.

I move to the parapet and sit on it, trying to realise all that Rome has done, all that she will yet do. I whisper her name softly: "Roma, Roma." She is as beautiful now as when Nero's palace crowned two of her hills. She does not age because she assimilates; all that comes to her becomes part of her or it cannot exist, and all that belongs to her is in some way, somehow—good.

Perhaps our critical faculties are dormant in great love; certainly here we like what elsewhere we should find blatant and noisy. She is great, noble, splendid—what does it matter if that with which she clothes herself is sometimes glaring to our eyes? She can never be vulgar, her personality is too great, her simplicity too childlike. She is no illusive fairy, but a goddess carved in mountains, free to the sky; no pitiful comforter of the weak and the unfit, no friend to the moral or physical degenerate, but she thrusts a bar of steel into the hands of those who can fight. She is a friend for the strong and the young in spirit, for those who

can draw strength from her dreams. In every *The Roof-
garden* woman's figure by Michael Angelo I see Rome, Rome always, even in the Madonna of the Pietà, where a sorrowing mother sees Hope in the death of her son.

I am wakened from dreaming of her by Thérèse who comes towards me carrying on a tray a bowl of milk, salad, and some bread. I laugh and say to her : " Here, looking down at the garden of Lucullus, you bring me these things for food ; where are the nightingale tongues for a banquet ? " She answers : " I think you prefer the nightingales in the garden ; how they are singing to-night, and how green the trees look in the moonlight ! "

I look toward the Pincio ; Villa Medici is yellow-pink in its sheltering trees, like an onyx set in emeralds. Quite close to me is the church of the Trinità dei Monti, the top of its towers are on a level with my roof. This is the Eye of the world, for Rome is all around me and Rome is the City of the world.

The moon is now high up in the sky ; everything is bathed in its vague light—flowers, gardens,

*The Roof-
garden* the roof of the Pantheon, the column of the Piazza Colonna, the tower of the Milizie. The small villa on the Palatine I can see quite clearly, and also the monastery on the Aventine. The roof of the synagogue is silver and looks as if another moon were rising from the heart of Rome.

Many lights are put out, the streets are quiet now. Below in the piazza some students pass, they are singing a song ; the midnight bell rings the Capuchins into their church to pray ; from far away comes the sound of the whistle of a train journeying into the night, people are going away in it—unhappy people going away from Rome.

The moon begins to set and the Milky Way and the stars creep forward from a bluer sky ; the moon has not yet disappeared before there is a new light in the sky. I lean over the parapet—Rome is truly asleep. Fear catches at my heart, perhaps she will not wake again, perhaps she has gone to sleep for ever : no one stirs, there is no sound of any kind but the leaves of the bushes moving in a fresh-sprung breeze.

Suddenly the bells ring—all the bells of Rome ring the Ave Maria ; slowly Rome wakes to day once more and the swallows are flying round and round noisily. On the iron halo of the statue of the Madonna in the piazza are seated many little birds chirruping. Some wine-carts from the Campagna pass through Piazza di Spagna—the horses are covered with bells. These early morning sounds are all musical. *The Roof-garden*

The air is fresh, almost cold ; then through what is half mist, half cloud, the new sun rises on Rome again, on Rome—and somewhere below as if to greet it rings the clear laughter of a boy.

“ Cingimi o Roma d’azzurro, di sole m’illumina
o Roma,
raggia divino il sole pe’ larghi azzurri tuoi.”

THE FAUN

The Faun **I** WAS sitting by the fire with my eyes shut, ringing some camel bells and trying to imagine that I was once again under the stars at the top of the Kharzan pass listening to an on-coming caravan, when the door suddenly burst open and the Faun rushed in with a small green book in his hand.

He said : "I have just finished this book and must read you some bits from it." He sat down on a large green cushion on the floor and began to read aloud. I interrupted him : "Please first tell me the name of the book."

"Well, if you insist," he laughed, "I will tell you. It is called 'The Book of Tea,' and as it is about the East and written by one belonging to the Orient you will of course find it perfect—and it is." He turned over the pages and read aloud.

He had just finished reading to me from the chapter on flowers : "The Empress Komio, one of our most renowned Nara sovereigns, sang—
'If I pluck thee my hand will defile thee, O flower :

standing in the meadows as thou art, I offer thee *The Faun* to the Buddhas of the past, of the present, of the future——” when I stopped him.

“Faun, do not read me any more bits ; begin from the beginning and read the whole book through, but first bring from the next room the jade bowl in which are floating stemless white roses, and put it here between us on the floor.”

“No,” he said, “let us go out to the garden on the Aventine and sit on the wall there, looking at Rome and at the garden of orange-trees below us, and whilst you look at these things I will read aloud this book, and when you read I will look at the Tiber and Rome.” So we went.

The Faun is always like this, and he is nearly always smiling ; he is a Roman and a sculptor, and he has a name, though no one can call him anything but Faun. He carries with him everywhere the gaiety of forest life, the haunting shade of leafy valleys, the laughter of running water, the little cries of surprised wild things, the joy of wood flowers and the glancing of sunlight on green moss through trembling branches.

It is difficult to believe he has a home just

The Faun as other people have, and that he lives with human beings who are dear to him. When he runs down the many flights of marble steps I expect him to disappear into the mountains or into the old ilex wood near Villa Medici, or even into that dark temple on the Palatine into which a small waterfall drops noisily and ceaselessly. But I know it is quite different. He often speaks of his home and his relations, and from what he says I think of them all as a pack of happy children dancing on green lawns and always laughing in the sun.

We haunt the Aventine together, the hill I love above all the other hills. It is lonely and almost deserted, but it means music, sunshine, and afternoons on which we watch the light on the Tiber glowing from the reflection of the houses on the island—rose-red, yellow, crimson and gold, and what purples swirl down with the stream !

We sit on a wall, absorbed in gazing at Rome, at her houses, her palaces, the cupolas of her churches ; we feel as if behind each window flashing in the sun a friendly hand were waving to us.

Rome stands before us as we love her, not belonging to any one period, not restored to any

one time, but just herself, one building not entirely *The Faun* demolishing what has been before but growing out of it in the way life itself grows and alters, slowly and not by violent changes. We can see this so well, standing outside the church of San Giovanni e Paolo and in many narrow streets in which unnamed ruins stand on ruins whose names are forgotten. The two-weeks tourist who raves at modern Rome and its monstrous new buildings merely does not know or understand what Rome was. Change has always been her strength, and her right that the new should also have its place. Each generation has its own needs, and they are different from those of the last, and Rome is not a ruined city dug out of the sheltering womb of the earth, re-born only as a living thing that had died, but is a live place inhabited by living people.

After all, what are the best preserved ruins that are left us but a heap of stones upon which wise persons write wise books from which we learn nothing but the driest of facts or the wildest of guesses? It is through Rome now that we can learn what she was when ruler of the world : her people have changed very little, it is the rest of the

The Faun world that has altered. We love the Forum and the Palatine not for the things we have been taught about them but for what we feel about them, and it is in the clouds above the Forum that we see the Via Sacra where Horace walked, not on the stones that the guide points out to us, and the house of Augustus in the shadows of the cypresses near the Villa Mills, not in the cavern-like rooms through which we pass. They are useful for pedants to quarrel over and archæologists to build theories on, but not for those who, on the fragile webs of fancy, try to reach the truth.

All that we see and reconstruct from the past is but as shadowy objects are figured on a veil which time trails before our eyes. It is beyond that and in the intangible that we must seek ; and what do we find there but our own lives lived over and over again and just in the same way ? There is only the eternal recurrence with the eternal desire to live it all again, and the eternal despair in seeking a reason for that desire. There is indeed no change, but we paint cruelty and evil in brighter colours the further away they are from us. There are no susceptibilities to hurt when we speak of Nero, but

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who would dare to write of the present as it is? It *The Faun* is enough for us to know that under this sky and in the arms of these engirdling mountains men lived and died, whose ideals and passions still in some mysterious way cling around this place, and we see more of Rome's story in the rushing waters of the Tiber than in the stone masses of the Colosseum.

We stop reading, and silently we watch the hills that surround Rome, and that line of lonely pines on the slope above the Vatican, but we are half afraid to realise all the beauty we see for fear it should be taken away from us.

We leave the garden and go into the cloisters of Sant' Alessio to see the orange-trees which grow there. They are freighted with golden fruit ; some little blind boys in grey are standing under them, blowing through shrill tin whistles. We are so glad that they can hear, poor little blind boys, we wish that all we see we could turn into music, so that through their unhurt ears, at least, they could know of the wonderful beauty of the world. We lift them up to feel how many oranges there are all growing so close together, and how warm

The Faun they are in the sun-heat—surely the warmth will tell them of the colour.

Sometimes we go to Villa Madama, and sit there in the garden by the side of the greenest of ponds, and then walk to the fountain to look at the elephant's head of stone, and the clusters of pomegranates on either side of his flapping ears. The garden is a tangle of weeds, though sometimes flowers creep through the long grasses as if to show how eternal is the resurrection of loveliness in spite of crumbling ruin and desolation.

There are paths from it leading into fields in which spring first breathes in tiny furry buds and where the youngest lambs are sheltered from the wind. We have sat there on the scanty grass under a tree of blossoms so silently that the sheep have decided that we are quite harmless, and have gathered round us whilst we listened to the busy and persistent sound of the nibbling of grass. Even the little lambs, so young that they stood with difficulty on their insecure legs, which they managed much as a learner manages walking on stilts, were not frightened when we held out our hands to them; the sheep-dog curled up at our feet, the

shepherd-boy lay by a hedge near to us playing *The Faun* his pipe.

Some blossoms fell on the ground ; their leaves were a faint pink and in the middle deep red, as if fairies had pricked their fingers and laid the drops of blood on to the flowers.

The Faun, like many who have always lived in Rome, did not know the churches well. He has come with me often when I have spent whole mornings going from one church to another. We went together to see the crowd which always kneels before the Madonna in the church of Sant' Agostino. There are many lights hanging from the ceiling in front of her, and the walls on either side are covered with innumerable votive offerings. She and her child have jewels of every kind on their heads and robes, and many necklaces of diamonds and rings, all of which shine in the red light. They are as the tears of all her future sorrow, and all the sparkling laughter of His childhood ; they are the tears of all those who have wept, and whose teardrops she has turned into precious stones. It is strange, in passing, to see the faces of those who kneel and pray ; there is often an expression

The Faun of despair in their eyes. One cannot look again but one longs to touch their hands and say : "Remember it is only for a moment, and perhaps it is all only a dream." But would they believe that sorrow passes ? Pain leaves no room for philosophy ; it fills each sense and deadens it to its own level of agony.

The Faun had not seen the Guido Reni angels in the chapel of Santa Silvia in San Gregorio : all despisers of Reni should go and see these divine young things who choir to a permanently empty church. In another chapel of the same church I showed him the tabernacle in alabaster, in which are statuettes of St. Benedict and Santa Scolastica ; and we lifted up the lace over the predella in the chapel of St. Gregory to see the picture which is painted on it. We have been together to the church of Santo Stefano Rotondo. There we crept round the building, looking at the tall Ionic columns in the centre, fearing we should see the pictures of the martyred saints on the surrounding walls. Before leaving we stood undecided. "Ought we to go round and look at them ?" But the door was open ; outside we saw some

trees whose branches were waving in the wind, a *The Faun* little dog jumped about barking. We ran out of the church. "We will look at them another day ; not now, not now."

He had not seen the cloisters of San Cosimato, which do not lose their beauty by being crowded by the old men and women for whom it is now a home. We spent a morning there and spoke to some of the old men who were sitting in the winter sun. One of them took us to see the kitchen, where on the walls were hung enormous copper pots. If we had not seen the kind nuns who were busy preparing the food—one let me roll a rissole in bread-crumbs—we should have been certain that we had wandered into the kitchen of some ogre. Giant baskets held masses of green vegetables, the pans were not ordinary pans but large empty spaces ringed in by iron, on an oven a man was poaching a hundred eggs, and near the door was a trolley filled with bread.

The room in which the old men dine was once the refectory of the convent ; it is long and low with dark oak tables reaching from one end to the other. The men had not yet entered for their

The Faun meal but the tables were laid and ready with rows of shiny pewter plates and pewter water-jugs, and at little distances there were simple glass bottles filled with red wine—the wine and the pewter were reflected on the polished wood.

We wandered from there to look at the old houses in the Trastevere. I care for that part of Rome almost more than any other. It was there that, walking about one night, I found the lanterns that are used to mark the places where the road is up. They are quite Chinese in shape, almost square but a little smaller at the top, where the plain frame is covered by a flat piece of wood. They are covered with light red cotton and are one of the nicest things in modern Rome. I persuaded the man in charge to let me take one away with me, and it sits on my roof amongst bushes of laurel and bay ; its red light on a moonless night is like a glimpse into a garden of China.

Some people complain of the tramways. The Faun and I do not hate the tramways, they lead us to many places that we care for, they mean long days on the hills, from where we watch the blue Campagna through the grey leaves of olive-

trees ; we have even complained that there is no *The Faun* tram to take us to the Baths of Caracalla, where we go and climb a small stair which leads to the top of a very solid wall, and there where Shelley may have dreamt—some of his sadness clings to the broken arches—we sit and talk of him, read what he has written and reap his

“ phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.”

Often our friend Peter comes with us. We make him stand near to a column and say aloud poems which he remembers. He is dark with coal-black hair; his face is very pale, his eyes deep blue, black-rimmed and mystical. He wears dark clothes, a soft black Roman hat, and a student's black tie.

He loves clouds beyond all things, and whenever we see a new whiteness creeping over Monte Cavo we say : “ Peter should see this cloud, surely it is more wonderful than all the rest ! ” We three have often watched the clouds, have noticed how they take the shape of the things over which they float : near the Apennines they are like precipitous rocks, over the Italian pines—which themselves

The Faun look like anchored clouds—they become their softer reflections, and over Rome they are like many wind-built domes.

We often talk of Peter when he is not with us. To us he means Rome as she was at her best: we can, through knowing him, understand the strength that gained continents and the justice that held them.

To me the Faun means Rome also, but he belongs to unrecorded times even before the inhabitants of this garden of the earth lived in little reed huts. If people knew how often he and I rush together to the Belvedere of Septimius Severus on the Palatine to look down below us at the small wood of winter trees near San Gregorio, they would perhaps laugh at us, but if they knew for what it is that we are waiting they too would all run with us in the hope of seeing the first moment that the sap glows crimson through the leafless branches.

Yes, we are impatiently waiting spring, and with the first days of its coming we are going to walk on the Via Appia through the night to Albano, to see night with the tombs and dawn with the mountains.

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